

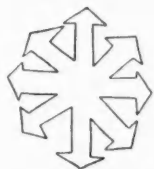
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Business correspondence should be addressed to the University of Chicago Press.

Editorial correspondence should be addressed to Roger Caillois, Editor, International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies, 19 Avenue Kléber, Paris 16^e, France.

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DIODENES

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ECONOMICS

AND THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES:

A DESERT FRONTIER?

One of the important intellectual interests of American scholars and scientists at the present time is the movement toward greater integration of specialized fields and disciplines. The size of the movement must not be exaggerated—it concerns a small minority of scholars, and most specialists are still content to stay comfortably within the cosy walls of their own specialty. Nevertheless there is something which might be called an “interdisciplinary movement” in many areas of knowledge, and if the movement is occasionally more undisciplined than interdisciplinary, this can be charitably ascribed to growing pains.

Three sources of this movement can be distinguished. In the first place there is a certain dynamic process in the development of pure theory which tends toward the integration of different fields. Within each discipline there is a tendency for theory to become more and more general. It is one of the marks of a developing science that old theories can usually be seen as special cases of the newer theories. Thus, in physics, the Newtonian mechanics can be exhibited, I am told, as a special case of the theory of relativity. In economics the “classical” theory of Adam Smith and

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Ricardo can be seen as a special case of modern theories of value and employment. It would not be surprising if the increase in generality of theory led to a breakdown of the conventional barriers between disciplines. This has already happened to a considerable extent in the physical sciences, and it is difficult these days to tell where physical theory leaves off and chemical theory begins. Concepts which used to be pure chemistry, like valency, now turn out to have a basis in atomic physics. We still do not have a unified theory of the machinery of life, but we seem to be advancing in this direction with increased knowledge of the physical and chemical accompaniments of life processes. In the social sciences psychoanalytic theory has made a profound impact on sociology and anthropology. Biological theories of the interaction of populations, of growth, of ecological succession, and of homeostasis have an impact on the social sciences, even on economics. Economic theory itself is surely a special case of a much more general theory of society, a general theory which is not quite explicit but which sometimes seems to be just around the corner. Cybernetics seems to offer a clue to the unification of many disciplines; information theory jumps from electrical engineering with a spark of excitement into the social sciences. So widespread is this movement that a new society to enshrine it is in process of formation, known at the moment as the "Society for the Advancement of General Systems Theory."

The second source of the interdisciplinary movement is closely related to the first. It is the development of what might be called "interstitial fields" between two or more old-established disciplines. In the natural sciences the rise of physical chemistry in the second half of the nineteenth century is a good example. Now it almost seems as if the hybrid threatens to displace both its parents. Similarly, the twentieth century has seen marked advances in biophysics and biochemistry. In the social sciences the rise of social psychology as a recognized discipline in the last generation parallels the rise of physical chemistry two generations earlier. Here too there seems to be some tendency for the hybrid offspring to gobble up the parents as the realization grows that society consists of the interaction of individuals, and that individuals cannot be understood apart from the society which grew and which nourishes them. Social anthropology likewise threatens to take over sociology on the one side and anthropology on the other.

The third source of interdisciplinary interest is the growth of specialized empirical and professional fields which utilize theoretical and conceptual material from more than one of the traditional disciplines. Thus, medicine

is a professional field which draws on the resources of all the physical sciences, and which is beginning to draw more and more on the social sciences. Many of the advances in biophysics and biochemistry have been stimulated by the demands and opportunities provided by medical and surgical practice. The recent rise to prominence of psychiatry, psychosomatic, and social medicine, with the recognition that the source of many diseases lies in the experiences, perceptions, and social environment of the patient, opens a door to many important developments in the social sciences. Engineering increasingly requires theoretical material drawn not only from the physical sciences but from the social sciences as well. Even in law, the most formal and isolated of the great professions, there is increasing interest in drawing on the resources of the various social sciences, though this movement is still in a very early stage. Other professions are likewise finding that the logic of their own professional activities forces them into a more integrated approach to their theoretical foundations. Social work has perhaps leaned too heavily on psychoanalysis, and needs to reach out to other social sciences. Architecture is awakening to the fact that buildings are made for people and must be built around patterns of behavior as well as engineering necessities. Schools of education, business, nursing, dentistry, and some others have not perhaps yet realized some of the opportunities for integrative research which are open to them. Their problems, however, involve more disciplines than they are often aware of.

Even more than in the "regular" professions, however, interest in interdisciplinary work arises in what might be called the "sub-professions," those specialized branches of empirical study which may perhaps be on the way to becoming recognized professions, but which at present occupy a status somewhere between the full-fledged profession and the "pure" disciplines. Of these sub-professions the most striking example perhaps is industrial relations, an area of study which has had phenomenal growth in the past generation. It draws on economics, for it has to be interested in wage theory and employment theory. It draws even more on sociology for the study of the dynamics of labor organizations and labor-management relations. It draws on social psychology and group dynamics, especially in its study of small-group interactions. It is at least adjacent to the field of industrial psychology. International relations is another specialty which draws on many disciplines—economics, political science, anthropology. The study of economic development and culture change is forcing certain rapprochements between economics and anthropology. In the area of family relations we have a rapidly developing field which

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draws its theoretical material from psychology, sociology, even from economics. The list is by no means exhaustive.

To these three sources of the interdisciplinary movement one should perhaps add a fourth—the stimulus given to the “behavioral sciences” by the Ford Foundation. It is not wholly clear even now what defines a behavioral science. The operational definition—a science which can get support from the Ford Foundation—perhaps illustrates the difficulties of operational definitions better than it defines a behavioral science. But if the edges of behavioral science are not altogether clear, this is probably as it should be—concepts should spread out from a center rather than be enclosed by a fence. And the center of the behavioral sciences, it is fairly clear, is social psychology. Social psychology and its two parent fields, sociology and psychology, are clearly within the fold. Social anthropology is hard to tell from sociology these days, and gets a first-class ticket. Physical anthropology (if there are any people left who go around measuring skulls) probably gets no ticket at all. Political science is divided: the students of political behavior, who are really social psychologists in disguise, come in as approximately full members. Political theorists and institutionalists are admitted only on promise of improvement. History of the traditional sort is barely allowed to peek in the back door. There is a certain tendency for those outside the behavioral sciences to be suspicious, and perhaps a little envious, of the support they have received. The impartial observer must admit, however, that the behavioral sciences are not merely a whim of the Ford Foundation, but that they do represent a certain core of disciplines and methods which have growing unity, and a certain common culture. The Ford Foundation’s support rests on an already existing movement, and while it no doubt encourages this movement, it has in no sense created it.

Up to this point I have not mentioned economics. The main task of this article, however, is to examine the relation of economics both to the general movement for the integration of knowledge and to the particular movement for unity in the behavioral sciences. It must be confessed that at least at first sight economics stands somewhat aloof from this general movement. Economics is an old, rather self-contained discipline. It has some claims, after all, to being the second oldest of the sciences, emerging in systematic form with Adam Smith in 1776, a century later than Newton but earlier than Dalton, Darwin, or Freud. Economists live in something of a world of their own, and do not, for the most part, feel any strong urges to communicate with or to learn from sociologists, psychologists,

and so on. Some attempts have been made to bring economics and psychology together,¹ but it cannot be claimed that there is any discipline of "economic psychology," or of "economic sociology" corresponding in status to social psychology. There was a time when "political economy" was a respected name. In a sense, however, it was prematurely born and died in infancy. Economics had to escape from this entanglement with political science and develop an abstract discipline of its own in the middle of the last century—an escape which is symbolized by the very substitution of the older name "political economy" by the term "economics." Only within the past few years has there been some revival of interest in what perhaps had better be called "economic politics"—an attempt to develop a unified view of the economic and political processes in society.² There have been some attempts to develop the study of economic anthropology.³ On the whole, however, anthropologists and economists have gone their separate ways with the minimum of contact, and even the current interest in the relation between culture change and economic development has not, as yet, produced any major theoretical integration.

The reasons for this relative isolation of economics lie partly in its history as an "old" discipline, inclined to be self-contained and indifferent or even hostile to the "upstarts," and partly in the nature of the economist's abstraction. The economist's universe consists not of men but of commodities and the quantities associated with them—prices, outputs, stocks, consumptions, rates of interest, and so on. His data consists for the most part of time series of these variables. Economics is therefore a kind of astronomy of commodities, studying the movements and interrelations of these various time series, and if these movements are regular enough the incidental fact that commodities are moved by men can be neglected. Astronomers can, in similar fashion, neglect the question whether the planets are moved by angels, because whether they are so moved or not, angels are so delightfully regular in their behavior that they can be neglected, or at least replaced by differential equations. Unfortunately for the economist, however, men are not as regular in their motions as angels, and it is more difficult to replace them by equations. It may be worth while, therefore, to explore some possibilities of advance in this "desert

1. See especially George Katona, *Psychological Analysis of Economic Behavior* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1951), and Albert Lauterbach, *Man, Motives and Money* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1954).

2. *Politics, Economics, and Welfare*, by R. A. Dahl and C. E. Lindblom (New York, Harper, 1953), represents a major attempt in this direction.

3. See M. J. Herskovitz, *Economic Anthropology* (New York, Knopf, 1952).

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frontier" that lies between economics and the other social or behavioral sciences.

Part of the difficulties of this frontier, and one reason for the self-sufficiency of economics, lies in the fact that whereas economics organizes itself around a *level of abstraction*—the "commodity universe"—the other behavioral and social sciences tend more to organize themselves around various forms of *method of procedure*. It is not altogether easy to identify the various levels of abstraction at which the other behavioral sciences operate. We may say, for instance, that psychology centers around systems of stimulus and response, sociology around systems of interaction of persons, and anthropology around the study of simple static states of culture. Each of these propositions, however, would be disputed vigorously by many competent experts in the various fields and important counter-examples could easily be given. It is much easier to set up a classification of methods on which there would be fairly general agreement and which would cut across the traditional division into departments or disciplines. In examining the possible contribution of the behavioral sciences to economics, then, we will find it more fruitful to examine the contribution of the various methods, rather than the contribution of various disciplines. The four methods which I propose to consider are: (1) the experimental, (2) the observational, (3) the metrical, and (4) the clinical. These methods are not, of course, peculiar to the behavioral sciences. It can be claimed, however, that the behavioral sciences have been more self-critical and more self-conscious about their methods than any other group of sciences in recent years, and that all the sciences might do well to subject themselves to at least something of this process of self-examination.

The experimental method is a familiar one in science. It consists essentially in setting up and observing an artificial situation in which the variables are fewer and more subject to control than in "nature." In the behavioral sciences it has been most employed by psychologists, especially animal psychologists. The rat threading his maze, the pigeon pecking for food, the monkey solving his problems, are the trade marks of this craft. Human subjects have not been lacking. Studies of perception and cognition owe much to experiment with humans, especially college sophomores. The processes of learning, the formation of mental images, and the whole complex interaction of stimulus and response have been subject to inquiry through experiment. The method has also been employed, with more difficulty but still with some success, by the social psychologist in the study of small groups. The tradition of Kurt Lewin and "group dy-

namics," the fascinating studies of communication and interaction in small groups by Alex Bavelas, and the elaborate studies of group organization and behavior at the RAND Corporation are all examples of this method. Even in anthropology the experimental method is not entirely lacking. Cornell University, for instance, under the leadership of Allan Holmberg, is conducting what might be called a quasi-experiment in culture change in a whole community in the mountains of Peru, by keeping close watch on the effects of a planned series of innovations.

Up to the present, economics has been little influenced by the experimental method: it is difficult to get the banker or the corporation executive or even the housewife into a laboratory and subject them to simplified artificial economic situations to see what they would do. Nevertheless, there are some recent developments, for instance, in the theory of games, in decision theory, and in utility theory, which point toward certain possibilities of experimental verification. The phenomenon which is most subject to investigation here is that of choice under conditions of uncertainty. We can, for example, give subjects the choice between various outcomes, rewards, or punishments of varying degrees of probability and see whether their responses are consistent with various assumptions about utility functions. It may be doubted whether the results of these experiments will throw any startlingly new light on the processes of choice in the real world. Nevertheless, choice, or the decision-making process, especially under conditions of uncertainty, is so fundamental to the economic process, and is so little understood, that any light shed on it is welcome.

The observational method is again common to many sciences—astronomy, geology, the various branches of natural history, as well as the social sciences. It may be divided roughly into observations in space and observations through time, though all observational studies should ideally consist both of observations of variables, structures, and relationships existing at a *moment* of time and of records (time series) of these observations at regular intervals through time. In the behavioral sciences much sociology and most anthropology follows this method. Sociologists of the type of Max Weber draw upon historical record for their data, and derive their generalizations from careful study of this material. Sociologists of the questionnaire-interview school and anthropologists in their field work also rely almost exclusively on the observational method. Economics relies heavily on this method. If a distinction were to be drawn between its use in economics and in the other behavioral sciences, one might say that

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economics is more interested in observation of variables through time (that is, in time series), whereas sociology and anthropology are more interested in observations in "space" of some kind. The space need not be geographical space—it may be one of many "social spaces" or "sample spaces," but the main interest is in the structure and relationships of variables as they exist at a moment, or through a fairly brief interval of time. One might say also that economics is more interested in variables which are capable of fairly exact quantitative measurement, whereas sociology and anthropology are more interested in qualitative descriptions and relationships. A third possible distinction is that economics is apt to be content with data obtained as a by-product of social processes which have other main objectives. Thus, much economic information comes as a by-product of tax systems—income data, for example, from the income tax, and trade data from customs. The behavioral sciences on the other hand are less apt to be satisfied with "by-product" data and have developed many ingenious methods for the deliberate and careful collection of information.

It must be emphasized that these distinctions are very rough, and important exceptions could be found to all of them—they define foci of interest rather than clear boundaries. Furthermore, in part under the stimulus of the "interdisciplinary movement" these distinctions are breaking down. One of the most important developments in economics in the past ten or fifteen years has been a great development of specialized data-collection, especially through the survey method. The Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan, for instance, conducts at regular intervals an elaborate survey of consumer finances. Thus, the economist no longer has to rely on data drawn from the haphazard, but unfortunately not random, processes of the tax and customs system, but has an independent source of information carefully designed to yield the maximum of information per unit cost. Sociologists and anthropologists are getting more aware of the importance of time series, and there has been some growth of "longitudinal" studies which follow a certain situation through many years. Much remains to be done in this connection, however, and it is perhaps the greatest weakness of these sciences that they have too many "one-shot" studies relating to a particular time and place, and that the information gathered does not feed into a continuing time series in the way that most economic information does. It is hard to overestimate, for instance, the importance for economics of the *continuous* collection of national income data which has been going on now for twenty-five years or more. There is nothing like this, as yet, in the other social sciences. In

economics we have a reasonably clear and accurate picture of the over-all magnitudes of the economy and a picture of how these magnitudes proceed through time. Current data is always seen as the last element of a long time series, and this gives it a richness and significance which it would not otherwise possess. In the other social sciences each piece of information tends to stand alone, without reference to any over-all picture either in time or in space.

The third method which may be distinguished is the metrical method. This is in a sense a subdivision of the observational method, but it has so many characteristics of its own that it is perhaps worth a separate heading. In the past generation or so there has grown up in many different disciplines an interest in quantification, in indices, in exact measurement of variables, and in the attempt to discover stable functional relationships among these variables by methods involving fairly advanced mathematical and statistical technique. So widespread is this movement that it might almost be identified as a "metrics" movement. Thus, in economics we have seen the rise of econometrics; in psychology, psychometrics; in biology, biometrics; and even in sociology, sociometrics. The curious thing about this movement, however, is that it is in the main one of isolated and unrelated disciplines. In spite of the fact that it uses the one basic language of mathematics, the metrics movements in the various disciplines have been surprisingly isolated, largely unaware of each other's work, and have remained for the most part within the framework of their respective disciplines. Thus, psychometrics has developed mainly around the problem of psychological testing. Its main tools have been correlation and factor analysis; its main interest has been the identification of stable traits or elements in test performance. Sociometrics is perhaps the least successful, or perhaps one should say respectable, of the various metrics. Its focus of interest has been in the quantification of distributions and of spatial relationships. Econometrics has undergone a phenomenal growth in the past twenty-five years, and has had a significant impact on theory and practice in economics. Its main focus of interest is the identification of stable functional relationships among economic variables, such as demand and supply functions, consumption functions, and so on. It is also interested in discovering stable difference equations among economic variables with a view to the possibilities of predicting their time course. The next few years may bring considerable convergence among these various metrics. They share many basic mathematical and statistical tools, and many of the basic models may turn out to be more closely related than is

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now apparent. Thus, models of learning in psychology attempt to relate time series of stimuli and responses: this is not wholly unrelated to the problem of economic dynamics, which also seeks to relate "earlier" to "later" variables in stable difference equations.

The fourth method of the behavioral sciences is the clinical method. Psychoanalysis is the chief monument of this method. It is used, however, in clinical psychology, in social work, in criminology, in town planning. The emphasis here is on the "cure" of a pressing practical problem. In one sense we may say that this also is an example of the observational method. The observations in this case, however, are of "cases"—that is, of situations which have some degree of morbidity, and they are directed mainly toward prescription of remedies. Verification comes, if at all, from the further observation of the effects of the remedies prescribed. In spite of the biased sample and the unsystematic nature of the verification processes, much has been learned from clinical observation, and a good deal of the theoretical structure of the behavioral sciences stems from data derived by this method. The impact of psychoanalytic theory on all the behavioral sciences has been great, even where it has not been accepted as quite scientifically respectable. The theory of personality and of motivation has been largely drawn from psychoanalytic sources. Cultural anthropology has also been deeply influenced by psychoanalytic theory in its theories of the mutual interaction of culture and personality, of the importance of child rearing customs on the dynamics of cultural preservation or change, and so on.

Economics has been affected very little by the clinical method, and practically not at all by psychoanalytic theory. Economic man had no parents and never was a child. The interest of economics focuses on rational, conscious, and reflective behavior rather than on irrational and sub-consciously motivated behavior. Nevertheless, there are areas in economics, such as the field of labor relations, where not only is a clinical approach possible, but where psychoanalytic theory also has considerable relevance. One does not need to go all the way and confine labor relations to the discussion of the employer as the father image or to attribute labor disputes to the unsatisfactory love of foremen, but one can still admit that the industrial relationship is not a purely economic relationship and that there are usually more things in dispute than wages and hours. It may be also, as Lauterbach has suggested, that childhood experiences in depression affect the outlook of the decision-makers of the next generation, and that this may account for something of a long cycle in economic affairs. There

is so little direct evidence for this proposition, however, that it cannot be awarded higher status than that of an interesting but unproved notion.

It is clear that the frontier between economics and the behavioral sciences is by no means wholly desert. It is true that beyond the safe departmental boundaries the ear is unusually sensitive to the voice of the Windy Platitude, and what is glimpsed around the corner of the sagebrush is frequently only the Obvious. It is true also that professional hazards are unusually high for the traveler, and academic rewards are more likely to go to those who stay at home and cultivate their departmental gardens rather than to those who venture forth on interdisciplinary territory. The economic psychologist is apt to find himself regarded as a psychologist by the economists and as an economist by the psychologists, and is pushed out from both departmental cases, and the same is apt to be true of any hybrid specialist, unless, like the social psychologist, he can get together with his kind and establish an intermediary oasis of his own. Nevertheless, the desert is irrigable, especially by the welcome springs which flow from the foundations, and under, these circumstances it may turn out to have astonishing reserves of intellectual fertility.

Irrigation, however, always raises the awkward question of which desert should be irrigated—assuming what is usually the case, that water is scarce. One may raise therefore a final awkward question—whether there are not other interdepartmental deserts which would be even more fruitful under irrigation than the one which stretches between economics and the other behavioral sciences. There is some evidence that it is not always interaction between closely related sciences which produces the most fruitful results, but that frequently hybrid vigor results from the crossing of two highly unrelated parent stocks. One should certainly not assume that it is only from the social sciences that economics will learn new tricks, and there are signs of fruitful interactions outside the traditional framework of the social sciences. One of the most exciting theoretical developments of the past ten years, for instance, has been the rise of information theory, which originated—and one cannot help expressing a little surprise—in electrical and communications engineering. Up to the present the impact of information theory on economics has been small. It is clear, however, that we are never going to solve the problem of economic dynamics unless we know something of how economic information—or more generally, information relative to economic decisions—is transmitted around the system. The particular abstract concept which the communication engineers have called “information”—which is simply a convenient

measure of the improbability of the symbols in a message—may not be a suitable abstraction for this problem, but at least economists are being stimulated by these developments to re-think the problem of information in their own discipline. We have gone too long in economics on the assumption that economic man never has to learn anything—that he is somehow mysteriously equipped from birth with all the knowledge necessary to rational behavior. Under assumption of perfect competition, where all economic man has to know is a set of prices which he can see plainly with the naked eye, it may well be that information or learning concepts are unnecessary. The introduction of imperfect competition into economics, however, means that poor old economic man now has to know all sorts of complicated relationships like demand and cost functions (and much worse things in game theory!) if he is to behave “rationally,” and how he gets to know these mysterious facts of his environment nobody ever asks. Once we abandon the assumption of perfect competition, then, the problem of the place of information and learning processes in economic behavior cannot be avoided.

Of more immediate importance to economics than information theory are certain developments in a rather ill-defined field which might be called the “theory of organization.” Some of this comes out of the biological sciences, in the notion of homeostasis and homeostatic mechanisms—those beautiful and subtle devices which regulate the constancies of the body—its temperature, blood pressure, and chemical and biological composition. The union of biology and electrical engineering produced cybernetics, the science of steersmanship, or of control mechanisms, so ably developed by Norbert Wiener.⁴ From this and various other sources, some from outside of traditional economics, some from inside, comes the lusty new discipline—which its enemies would describe as a cult—of “operations research” and “management science.” Mathematicians and even philosophers have been taking an increasing interest in problems which economists used to think were their private property. The theory of games comes out of a liaison between pure mathematics as embodied in Von Neumann and economics as embodied in Morgenstern.⁵ It is basically an attempt to define the nature of rational behavior under conditions of uncertainty of various kinds and degrees, in an environment which includes other “rational” beings with whom various agreements

4. Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics* (New York, Wiley, 1948).

5. J. Von Neumann and O. Morgenstern, *The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* 3rd ed. (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1953).

may or may not be made, and where all the participants abide by some minimum set of rules. The theory of games has stimulated renewed interest in utility theory because of the necessity of finding some measure of the "pay-offs" involved in various strategies. Philosophers and logicians vie with each other in devising axiomatic systems which will permit the construction of a utility function, while the poor economist looks on in some amazement, not quite knowing whether to be flattered or insulted. Just what will come out of all this ferment is hard to predict, but there is at least a good deal of intellectual excitement even if as yet the fruits seem to be largely a matter of promise.

Finally, it is my personal conviction, not perhaps shared by many other economists, that there is an important field of interdisciplinary advance between economics and the biological sciences. There are two grounds for believing this. The first is that there is a certain similarity in the theoretical problems of the two sciences. The problem of the "ecosystem"—the community of living organisms—in biology has many similarities with that of the price system in economics, and the idea of history as an ecological succession of temporary equilibria is fruitful and attractive. The biological organism and the social organization also show marked similarities. The great processes of metabolism (exchange), growth, internal transformations, homeostasis, information, and entropy exchange operate in both social and biological bodies, and it is not unreasonable to hope that a general theory of organization is possible which would serve as a first-approximation model for cells, animals, firms, states, and societies. This is not to say that a single theory can cover all these diverse organisms and organizations—the introduction of consciousness into the model, for instance, makes a profound modification. Nevertheless, it helps in the systemization of thought if these organizations can be placed in something like a continuum of increasing complexity.

The second possibility of interaction between economics and biology is at a more practical level. Economists are apt to forget that man is part of a complex biological system and that this imposes certain limitations on him. Biologists, on the other hand, especially those interested in conservation, are apt to forget that man is more than a biological species, in that he is capable of communication, learning, and problem solving on a scale far beyond the capacity of any other form of life. Somewhere between the economic naïveté of the conservationists and the biological naïveté of the economists it should be possible to establish a solid "inter-discipline" of economic biology which would take account of both char-

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acteristics of man—his biological base as a member of an ecosystem and his rational aspirations as an intelligent being.

If the reader is confused by the picture I have given, he is merely reflecting the realities of the situation. Nevertheless, even though the situation is confusing, it is also exciting. We live in a time of many intellectual frontiers. Some of these may turn out to be deserts. But many are capable of permanent academic settlements, and the crazy men and adventurers of today may be the classicists and the founding fathers of a respectable tomorrow.

OPINION AND POWER

This article is concerned with the general relations between power and informed public opinion in a Western democracy. It is based mainly on examples taken from France, where the separation between power and public opinion seems the sharpest, but is more or less applicable to all countries having the same political system. Parallel phenomena can be observed in most of the Western democracies, each of which could provide illustrations as striking as those the author has singled out.

I. BRIEF HISTORY

In order to estimate the present situation and the possibilities for its improvement, a brief historical sketch should first be given.

UNDER THE OLD REGIME

During the feudal or monarchical regime there was scarcely any need to inform the people; the king made the decision and the only condition for the smooth functioning of the system, apart, of course, from the personality of the sovereign, was his knowledge of the problems with which he had to deal. Moreover, such problems were, generally speaking, more political than economic: decisions had to be made in regard to a war, an

Translated by Elaine P. Halperin.

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arrest, a marriage. Correct information was certainly necessary in order to evaluate these problems fairly, but it was relatively easy to acquire.

Little by little, economic development, particularly the progress of commerce, led the sovereign to take measures of an economic nature. During the eighteenth century the numerous problems became sufficiently important and complex for the king, who was unable to see and know everything, to delegate to his ministers responsibility for the regulation of public affairs, particularly for the handling of the most serious problem, that of the public budget, which had acquired considerable importance.

At about this time the English were already publishing their financial accounts, or at least the disbursements and income of the state. Necker, the French Minister of Finance, tried to follow this example by publishing the "Royal Accounts" of the 1781 budget. This publication was vigorously opposed by various people, especially the nobility, who did not like the disclosure of their expenses to the public eye. At the same time, a large number of privileges or favors were revealed. Thus exposed, the privileged classes came out against the idea of informing the public. From this time on, it became apparent that informing (or not informing) is a means of governing. The argument used against publication was that the people, or the totality of public opinion, did not need to know the state's finances, this being the king's concern and not that of his subjects.

In order to conceal the true reasons, it was also alleged that these accounts were too complicated for ignorant people to understand their essential elements—the same argument, somewhat renovated, that we meet today.

POLITICAL DEMOCRACY

We find the concept of the sovereign people in political democracy: since the people are or have become sovereign, it is they who make the decisions and who must be informed. This transfer of sovereignty follows with implacable logic; yet, during the two centuries in which it occurred, the question of informing the new sovereign remained in suspense.

At first, the ignorance of the electorate was not a matter of major importance. The "sovereign" was not educated. Political democracy functioned haltingly, but it did function. Many voters cast their ballots according to instructions given them by their employers or by the clergy. The need for extensive information about economic questions was far from being as great as it is today; in keeping with the fundamental principle of the regime, the state intervened as little as possible, permit-

ting natural forces free play and allowing an equilibrium to be established.

After the Congress of Vienna and the 1848 Revolution, freedom of the press became the most solid dogma of bourgeois democracy in Europe; its revolutionary origin allows conservatives to use and abuse it.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

However, before the first World War new signs appeared in various countries. The popular parties were better organized and special interests already tended to be more clearly articulated, to the detriment of the general interest or of poorly protected individual interests.

After the first World War public awareness grew. Simultaneously, the delicate arbitration of interests was instituted. The sovereign people, until now minors, undertook to exercise power themselves under the regency of the upper bourgeoisie. Elections became more honest, selection more spontaneous.

A system in which many economic problems are raised, in which a delicate arbitration often has to be exercised, cannot function properly without correct information. The parliament chosen by the people must be even better informed than the people themselves; theoretically, it should know everything. Government must try to achieve quasi-perfection.

TENSIONS AND SPLITS

In fact, what must be feared is not only the lack of information about the various cogs of the political machinery, but the difference in their degree of information. If the people are very ignorant, the parliament a little more aware, and the government very well informed, the system will not function properly. The government might want to take the measures which the situation requires but whose usefulness parliament does not appreciate. Or parliament may wish to take the necessary measures, but ones which the country does not consider to be in conformity with the demands of the situation. Because of these splits democracy will cease to function well. Or again, the government may override public opinion, which puts a strain on the political system; or it yields, to the detriment of the public welfare and the interests of all.

Of course there are normal, traditional, and, all things considered, tolerable tensions. For example, parliament, though well informed, is traditionally less mindful of the need for a balanced budget than is the govern-

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ment. But this is less a question of information than of function. Parliamentarians know that the government is right, and they try above all to absolve themselves of responsibility by proposing increases in spending which they know to be dangerous. This procedure saves face for them in the eyes of the voters, or of certain voters. "We have proposed an improvement of your situation but the government has not agreed."

Yet in more concrete, more economic, and less arithmetical domains than that of the budget, the tensions that occur are greater and especially more serious because they can result in dangerous splits. We will cite a few examples from the experience of France, a country in which the separation between men and events is particularly clear.

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

The great economic mistakes, even in foreign policy, were not the results of an error of doctrine, of the application of a false doctrine, or of erratic reasoning, but of an inadequate knowledge of facts and basic data. It was not because conservatives, socialists, or radicals happened to be in power that these economic mistakes were made. Ignorance and the poor use of industrial equipment was the essential cause. The men in power, and not only they—parliaments and public opinion—were ignorant of essential facts which were accessible to them but which had not captured their attention.

Three major mistakes were made between the two wars. The first had to do with German reparations, between 1919 and 1925. The myth of "Germany will pay" plus a strictly legal approach brought on the failure of reparations and the fall of the franc with its far-reaching consequences. Even among government officials there was no awareness of public opinion, of the mechanism of international transfers, nor of how France had been able to pay five billion francs in 1871.

The government that committed this grave error was conservative. Its general tendency made it more inclined than the socialists to punish the enemy. But its mistake does not reside in this doctrinaire outlook. In a Western democracy a rather broad basis is necessary, one that includes all possible tendencies. In any case, it is scarcely possible *in abstracto* to condemn a trend. What truly deserves to be condemned is ignorance of the facts. A conservative government, even a nationalist one, could have succeeded in its reparation policy if it had been informed and if it had relied upon an informed public. It was this ignorance which the historian must condemn and which was so harmful to the country. The British

were the most clear-sighted, perhaps because the reduction in commerce opened their eyes. But the United States, as regards the interallied debts, gave evidence of a similar ignorance about international transfers.

The second mistake involved the monetary question and the crisis. In 1934-35 the conservatives of the "gold bloc" did not realize the need to stabilize the franc in the same way that both the dollar and the pound had been stabilized. Underestimating the disparity between the price levels that prevailed in the gold bloc countries and those that obtained in the rest of the world, and ignoring almost completely, although they were obvious, the psychological reactions to the nominal value of the franc, successive governments persisted in their position—an orthodox one, to be sure, but one that was in fact indefensible. The exception was Belgium, the only country that possessed an *Institut de Conjonction*. The situation in France resulted in the eruption of the Popular Front in May-June 1936 and finally in a much greater devaluation than that which the conservatives had attempted to avoid. The mistake was all the more inexcusable because it had been made ten years earlier in England; the return of the pound to the gold standard in 1925-26 had precipitated several years of strikes, and it did not prevent a subsequent devaluation of forty per cent. Besides, it may have contributed to the great world depression.

Here again the conservatives erred out of ignorance. It is readily understandable that for a good many reasons they wanted to protect the value of money, and it is not this with which we reproach them. But they are to blame precisely for not having known, because of their ignorance, how to protect this money. The only clear-sighted man among them, Paul Reynaud, had no followers and he was overwhelmed by the reproaches that defeatism usually utters. Ignorance, in reality, gives rise to a series of sentimental reactions, perhaps inspired by a vaguely unconscious awareness of not being entirely in the right.

The third mistake, that made by the Popular Front government of Léon Blum in 1936-37, is even more striking. In September, 1936, Blum had to resign himself to the devaluation of the franc, although he personally was opposed to it. Following the devaluation, a quick economic recovery took place, comparable to the recovery that had occurred in other countries a little earlier. All the signs tallied: industrial production, exports, etc., improved rapidly while strikes diminished, in part because of seasonal factors. The average working week was more than forty-six-hours and partial unemployment diminished rapidly.

Already the economists were figuring that pre-depression production

levels could be attained within a year. An achievement such as this would give the Popular Front an unprecedented victory—they meant, of course, a political victory. What the conservative governments had not known how to accomplish, a socialist government would succeed in doing, while continuing to work for social reforms.

But Léon Blum's government did not realize the magnitude of the recovery since its information came exclusively from rumors. It believed that the news which came from the industries themselves, or from the streets, was more reliable than statistics and general surveys. And, as always, rumor, by its distortions, underscored the poor state of affairs and the dangers. Not only did the government fail to exploit the ultra-favorable trend of which it was the beneficiary, but it decided upon a sudden reduction of working hours—forty hours a week with no exceptions allowed. Furthermore, the coal mines, a crucial section from the standpoint of recovery, were the first to be affected. In this way the government reversed the trend and put an end to a victory in the making. Signs of industrial production, of exportation, building, etc., culminated and declined, one after the other, bringing about the fall of the government.

Truth to tell, the government did not know how long an effective working week in the factories should be. It was doubtless unaware of the existence of established statistics on this question, compiled each month by work inspectors. Vaguely remorseful, Léon Blum in his memoirs categorically confirms his ignorance by citing matters that are entirely beside the point. So curious was this policy, so lacking in common sense, that a malicious humorist might see in it a deliberate attempt to provide an edifying example for future students of political science.

Here again, and this is the essential thing, there is no question of a doctrinal error. Reduction of the working hours is in accordance with the trend of history, and one can readily understand that a socialist government, more than any other, would adhere to it. But the point is that a socialist government, in the interests of its doctrine and its party, as well as for the good of the country, should have known the facts well in order to achieve the best results.

Once again public opinion was poorly informed. The word "unemployment" filled newspaper columns, but no necessary distinction was made between branches of the economy and skills. The employers themselves were not opposed to a measure which, while limiting production, would have reduced the amount of unsold goods. But they were against the increase in hourly wages that accompanied the forty-hour week.

Nothing, however, was done to inform public opinion. From then on the drama turned into tragedy.

During this same period similar illusions were rife in Republican Spain which also culminated in a military collapse. The leaders of Barcelona overestimated the potentialities of production and, in accordance with the trend of history, they took the appropriate measures—measures that were, however, unfortunate at that time and which greatly contributed to the victory of Franco.

In the United States the “New Deal” produced a somewhat analogous situation. From the doctrinary point of view each of us can approve or disapprove of these measures of intervention; but we must recognize that Roosevelt’s methods of intervention were not successful in reabsorbing unemployment and that they resulted in the sorry relapse of 1938. Here again, knowledge of the facts, of economic data, were lacking. The period following the war was a more fortunate one from an economic point of view, under the leadership of both the Democratic and the Republican parties.

THE DOCTRINE AND THE FACTS

Of the three major mistakes which, in France, marked this period between the wars, one was made by a socialist government, the other two by conservative governments. In all three instances the governments had to struggle against facts and were defeated by them.

On the other hand, during two periods—1926–1928 (Poincaré) and 1938–1939 (Daladier-Reynaud)—facts served as guides: in the first instance, against a segment of public opinion; in the second, against the unanimity of public opinion. In both cases the objective was achieved and success outstripped even the most optimistic predictions.

Let us again repeat: all the major political blunders were the result of ignorance and not of error in doctrine. Doctrine can tend either toward liberalism or toward state intervention. These are two different techniques; the realistic observer has no way of knowing how to choose between them. The government that finds itself in a given situation can, in effect, utilize either liberalism or state intervention. The important thing is to make proper use of the chosen implement, and to do so one has to know the route well, in order to achieve the best results.

POST-WAR FOOD RATIONING

During the post-war penury a new separation occurred between facts and

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public opinion. In accordance with laws that normally preside over the spread of rumors, the most outrageously optimistic news circulated among the population. These rumors had to do with the abundance of food supplies and the stupidity of officials who persisted in food rationing in order to preserve their jobs.

In certain countries the government foresaw the danger (England and Switzerland) and was careful to give the public truthful information about the exigencies of the moment. In other countries, notably in France, this method was not continued after liberation of the territory. To return to France: were the authorities correctly informed? The answer as regards the government can only be in the affirmative; the food administration informed the ministers concerned and were sufficiently familiar with both food resources and the people's needs. It was only in 1949-1950 that a balance was more or less reestablished between supply and demand. But no government—and governments succeeded one another numerous times—undertook the task of explaining satisfactorily to the public, as had been done in other countries, such things as the need for rationing, the farm situation, and other circumstances that justified these measures, particularly the social and humane nature of this regulation. No effort in this direction was made and illusions triumphed readily over a purely repressive ruling. A whole series of deceptions was the result of this ignorance, as well as a premature removal of controls and a resultant long-term inflation. In countries where public opinion was given correct information the result was altogether different; although they were not enthusiastic about these organized deprivations, the people, as enlightened sovereigns, accepted them, while the French rebelled, as ignorant subjects.

A CERTAIN TYPE OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL ANARCHISM

To the extent that it does not go beyond the framework of a bourgeois, anti-statist anarchism, the movement currently observed in France, and which has had some repercussions in Germany and in Italy, is but the indignant expression of a resentment, more or less keenly felt in the heart of every Frenchman, against the state and the bureaucratic machine. This natural resentment is nourished by ignorance.

The most patent, the least contestable facts, are, actually, unknown to the French public. For example, it overestimates the number of civil servants, believing them to be more numerous than in other countries; it readily declares that they represent seventy-five or eighty per cent of the budgetary outlay (the correct figure is between fifteen and twenty per

cent). It also believes that the automobile pays a much higher fuel tax than does the railway system; that the standard of living was higher fifty years ago, during those "good old days"; that France is a "garden" which can produce enough for the country's needs; that machines and automatic techniques will deprive everyone of employment, etc.

These current myths have finally been the cause, in certain circles, of a decidedly "reasonable" explosion, given the state of public information. Indeed, if all these facts were true one would naturally be extremely dissatisfied and prone to follow the leaders of this movement.

What is the result of this program? Let us rapidly review the political history of the last two centuries. We see that in 1789 the oppressed majority clamored for the convocation of the States-General and effectively obtained a transfer of powers that passed from the sovereign to the people as a whole.

In 1956 a segment of the people called for the convocation of these same States-General—and no one shrugged his shoulders—in order to overthrow the Assembly that emanated from the sovereign people. This proposal, reminiscent of nonsense stories and evoking the psychiatric setting, cannot be explained in terms of man's stupidity, but rather by the fact that power but not knowledge has been transferred.

Once again we have cited illustrations taken from France, because they are more familiar to us, but these conclusions are valid for all countries.

II. THE POWER TO INFORM

INFORMATION IS AN AGENCY OF THE GOVERNMENT

Information is an agency of the government in the same way that the executive, the legislative, the judiciary, and the schools are agencies of the government, but instead of being placed within a specialized framework, as the laws stipulated, it was entrusted to private initiative.

This solution is mainly the result of a legitimate fear of an official information bureau, heightened today by the disastrous experiments of Hitler and Mussolini. Freedom of the press can be defended directly, it might be said, as the lesser evil. Actually, the system goes further than the classical division of powers, since it divides—fragments—power itself. The combination of majority rule and balances permits the hope that all the facts will, in the long run, be disseminated. There are so many conflicting interests at play that a useful fact will finally be communicated by someone.

The democratic solution of freedom of information, even more than

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the solution of free enterprise, is based upon the law of probability and a sufficient fluidity. It is also the solution that scientific progress has adopted. Any historian is free to write that the Moors never penetrated into Spain, and any physicist may declare that the atom cannot be split. A scientist who might utter such a statement would not be prosecuted in a court of justice, but little by little, among the mass of divergent ideas, a narrower, more cohesive area of agreement would take shape; this is called scientific truth.

The intervention of the Stalinist government in the field of biology or astronomy is not calculated to induce us to abandon this erratic, pioneering method in favor of an official scientific truth.

But the problem is to ascertain if the fluidity is sufficient, if majority rule is successful in its curious police work and detecting capacity. In order to do this two conditions must be met: a) a large number of sufficiently powerful sources of information; b) the absence of systematic misrepresentation.

ON LARGE NUMBERS

There is complete equality in the power to inform, the defender of Western democracy will say. The press in particular is free. This means that tomorrow any individual has the right to establish a new newspaper in competition with the *New York Times* or the *Chicago Tribune* and to correct informational errors that these papers might have made.

Because of the magnitude of the necessary means, majority rule either does not materialize at all or tends to do so less and less. In the United States from 1910 to 1952, the number of daily papers was reduced by thirty-two per cent and that of weekly magazines by forty-four per cent. In France from 1914 to 1955, the number of dailies fell from forty-eight to eleven in Paris and from 269 to 123 in the province. In a great number of cities a quasi-monopoly of information subsists.

On the other hand, even an individual who is very anxious to be informed correctly is unable to read all the newspapers. This inability perhaps would not be of decisive importance and we would still be justified in speaking of the law of balances in the gamut if expressed public opinion was distributed more or less according to the classical mathematical laws of dispersion, with a strong central ascendancy. But, in fact, the power of money initially caused the balance to lean in one direction, and equilibrium was reestablished in certain countries only by an extreme counterbalance.

However, two extremes perhaps constitute an algebraic equilibrium, if not a political one.

SYSTEMATIC MISREPRESENTATION

Furthermore, private information admits of systematic distortions in regard to some subjects. Newspapers of divergent doctrines indulge in the same kind of distortions of fact in the hope of satisfying public opinion, or at least of not offending it. This attitude, more or less pronounced depending upon the country in which it manifests itself, ends by compromising the general welfare. Among historical examples we can recall that of food rationing, which we have just mentioned. No newspaper wished to announce to the public the unpleasant truth that food supplies were deficient.

Thus the relationship between information—the press in particular—and the public can be viewed as follows: a) The public has a preconceived opinion about facts, founded upon laws as yet imperfectly understood, but very rigorous. These are the laws of rumor, or oral information. b) The press and the organs of information of various political or doctrinal nuances do not dare to intervene too sharply in order to rectify the facts, for such frankness is always risky. Therefore a demagogy of information exists.

The publisher of a daily paper is subject to the public's control even more than is a member of parliament. His reelection comes up not every four or five years, but every day.

THE LIFE OF NEWS, RUMORS

Some event of special significance, or some particular fact, attracts the attention of observers who transmit the news to others. The transmission of what they have seen or heard is neither instantaneous nor accurate. Only a certain fraction of these facts is communicated and circulated. The others are still-born.

The recipient of transmitted news can in turn either communicate it to others, keep it to himself, or forget it. Some categories of news are destined to a rapid death while others are chosen for a strange fortune. And the choice of one kind of news or another is not made by sheer chance.

The transmission of news can, moreover, be deliberately and consciously distorted, or can even be twisted by an automatic mechanism that escapes not only the transmitter's awareness but also his memory. Further-

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more, forgetfulness and non-transmission bring about a distortion of the totality of facts, as if a filter retained a segment of the informing substance.

Distortion and selection of news occur according to determined laws which, at least in certain domains, are beginning to be well known. Although they have a universal characteristic, these laws vary (at least in intensity and in rigor) according to countries and epochs.

In actuality, oral, word-of-mouth news is distorted more easily and speedily than news that is subject to a certain control; but the slanting of the distortion is the same. The attentive and impersonal observer considers the news which is in the process of being selected and distorted by imperfect reporting and he can, after repeated observations, figure out the laws that govern this selection.

To begin with, let us exclude simple and sensational news. For example, Stalin's death, or the declaration of war in 1914, was known almost immediately all over the world. Let us also exclude news that lends itself to drama or to humor and that is quickly exploited by the professionals. An instance of this is the news, in part inaccurate, of Mendès-France's fondness for milk, which was circulated throughout the Western world in less than a week.

Let us concentrate chiefly on the economic and social domain. Certain subjective judgments are pessimistic, others optimistic; in other words, they are distorted in different ways. Therefore this criterion alone cannot serve as a guide for us. But in any case, spontaneous deviations correspond to a common logic and can be summed up in a few major observations:

1. If material interests are involved, and they usually are, then spontaneous deviations take the direction, in economic matters, which best facilitate the protection of these interests.

When public opinion is called upon to assess the rise of prices, the estimation is greater than the actual rise: consumers are more numerous than merchants. The salaried employee has no interest in seeing the cost of living increase, but the cost of living being what it is, it is to his advantage to make the rise seem greater. The taxpayer who declares his income is surprised to find it so high when he receives objective information about it from his employers or his paymasters.

During the war and the accompanying penury, any news about waste or the abundance of food received astonishing credence even among the supposedly clearest-thinking people. Should one person confide to another that a factory transformed butter (French) into grease for tanks (German), the news would spread with amazing rapidity. An observer in

a good position to hear such a rumor would find that it was repeated several times, each time in a more exaggerated form and enlarged with fresh details.

On the other hand, bad news about the harvest did not travel far. Why this difference? There was no advantage for the French in waste, but it was pleasant to learn, after the fact, that there had been waste. Not only did this knowledge give a firm foundation to their dissatisfaction but it also provided some hope for possible improvement. To announce a poor harvest, on the contrary, was to warn consumers of a reduction in their rations. People rebelled and refused to communicate this kind of news or even to take notice of it.

2. When strong feelings are involved, spontaneous distortion that is designed to justify and reinforce these feelings takes place.

The believer sees or hears miracles that escape the notice of the neutral observer. The moralist sees vice everywhere. This reinforces his own feelings. The champion of the quantitative theory of money and his opponent are often so passionately attached to their doctrine that they discover facts that confirm their belief. Even the scientist readily finds experiments that bear out his personal theories if he is vain about their expression.

Whenever feeling is dominant, public opinion is inflected in such a way as to justify that feeling. Thus, in time of war, the news of atrocities committed by the enemy is readily accepted without proof; stories of atrocities committed by allies are not bandied about.

3. As regards facts that pertain to a collective cause, spontaneous distortions generally tend to strengthen the cohesiveness of the group and to justify the battle that it is waging.

During wartime we are given a flattering impression of our armies, of their position, of their successes, and of the rightness of our cause, since this reinforces our confidence and supports us in our constant internal conflict.

In the same way, members of various political parties see (and, all things considered, they *should* see) the facts from different points of view. The image they have in their minds is one that tends to reinforce their convictions, to justify the personal sacrifices that they are called upon to make in the interest of their cause, and to remove the kind of internal uncertainties that are to be dreaded.

4. Sincere, unconscious, involuntary deviations tend in the same direction as those that are effected knowingly and deliberately, in defense of the position adopted by the individual, whether it be a material, intel-

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lectual, or affective one. (There are only rare exceptions to this general rule.)

5. When the transmission effected by a person takes place in response to a question asked, the distortion is not as pronounced as when it is spontaneous and quick. If a question is asked with great seriousness and ample time is given for the answer, then the distortion is slight.

Such questions as: "Are you sure of this? Have you been given information that confirms this?" stimulate thinking and may reduce distortion, particularly if they are asked calmly. On the other hand, if the transmitter is speaking to someone whose skepticism he anticipates, he often twists the news by buttressing it with details designed to overcome incredulity. Convinced himself, obviously not for rational reasons, he finds it useful to further the diffusion of "truth" by making it more credible and imposing. The "false Henry" contrived in order to accuse Dreyfus is an extreme example of this kind of behavior.

These diverse rules constitute only a general outline of the problem. They do not enable us to judge with certainty the way news is distorted in every case. Sometimes there are opposing forces at work, especially when interpretation is ambiguous. Each type of case must be examined carefully since the reporter's success depends upon a total absence of partisanship and, if this is possible, of personal motivation.

INFORMATIONAL DEMAGOGY

The term "demagogy" is a rather displeasing one because it has been used so frequently to describe efforts to combat and circumvent the most legitimate social reforms. It is entirely applicable, however, to certain forms of freedom of information and is more dangerous than political demagogy because it is more underhanded.

The reader (particularly if he wallows in a tide of rumors) is naturally inclined to accept certain kinds of information that are flattering to him or that give him a "pleasant" feeling. Of course, the feeling could, it is true, be anxiety, anger, or jealousy just as well as optimism or expectation of progress.

Journalists excel in finding and spreading the kind of information that is apt to nurture this sort of satisfaction—in distributing the drug that has become a necessity. This involves, of course, not an imitation of the truth but, on the contrary, a systematic selection of facts: a task all the easier to perform because usually by the time a myth reaches a certain number of people it also appeals to the informants themselves. Then the unconscious

assumes responsibility for this indispensable selection—a mechanism that leaves no room for remorse, or even for awareness of distortion.

Under such circumstances both the informant and the informed are nourished by their myth; it has to do with noble and edifying ideas (patriotism in wartime, for example), and this reciprocal communication contributes to the collective good. Under different circumstances, the myth puts one in mind of an infected sore which doesn't heal because the bandages applied are always contaminated.

TWO KINDS OF INFORMATION

The sources of information, newspapers in particular, can be divided into two categories:

- a. Those whose objective is mainly commercial; large profits constitute their aim.
- b. Those whose essential objectives are to defend a doctrine or party and to determine the attitude of the reader (the political vote, for example).

It is not always possible to make a clear distinction between these two categories. In any case, one of their common objectives is to increase the number of readers or listeners. Consequently, the fear of offending certain currents of opinion, of dissipating pleasant or necessary illusions, leads both kinds of newspapers to make more or less extensive "concessions" to the public. Some of these papers try to provide "pleasant" news in order to make a large profit. Others do so with an eye to inserting behind this flowery foreground the information or advice most likely to influence the reader in the desired direction.

Are newspapers full of untruths? Not at all. The contrary is more and more the case. We must now explain this paradoxical development.

THE TRUTH, PRINCIPAL FORM OF THE LIE

It is customary for ignorant people to refer sententiously to "statistics, that third form of untruth" and to think that they are being original when they utter this commonplace. Actually, all modes of expression, beginning with the word, naturally, are forms of untruth; this is so true that in slang the tongue is called "the liar." In reality, it is not instruments that lie or strike a false note but the men who make use of them.

Whenever a new mode of expression is invented, a new way of lying comes into being. Photography, even honest photography that is com-

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pletely devoid of trickery or retouching, can serve as a travesty of the truth; it can give a completely contradictory picture of the whole merely by resorting to the very effective and suggestive process of selection.

During the last few years the art of giving incorrect information has been perfected quite as thoroughly as the science of antibiotics or plastic materials. And there is no reason why persistent and well-paid effort should not achieve such a result.

The essential progress has consisted in avoiding, as far as possible, any positive untruth that might elicit a denial. Partial information, carefully arranged in a fine bouquet, enables the reporter to give his readers or listeners an impression of the whole that is very far removed from the reality. It also enables him to inspire in them precisely the attitude that he wants to see them take.

Thus, truth has become the principal form of the untruth. But into the mass of distortions that underlie apparent information the two objectives we mentioned above insinuate themselves. Accordingly, we have two categories of distortions:

Distortion to please the reader, for the purpose of conferring a benefit upon the informant (sale of the newspapers, for example).

Distortion designed to get the reader to adopt a certain attitude (elections, strikes, resistance to the government's fiscal policy, etc.).

THE POLITICAL AND PROFESSIONAL PRESS

Political objectives are never totally absent from the so-called informational press. The composition of the headlines and the layout in themselves constitute very effective means of pressure upon the reader who has only a limited amount of time and who cannot remain in a constant state of resistance. Reading, for many people, is but a relaxation from occupational or family tensions. With consummate skill the editor-in-chief selects and manipulates certain cleverly arranged texts and titles which are designed to lead the reader by the hand or, rather, by the eye.

A definitely political press addresses itself to a select, already engaged, sympathetic clientele. For such readers it is enough to present the shortcomings of other parties or other social categories in order to foster the desired emotions: solidarity founded upon jealousy, aversion, and sometimes purifying and liberating inspiration. All parties have some kind of liberation in mind.

For the last few years the professional press has become, if not more widespread, at least more violent. In an atmosphere of general dissatisfac-

tion, competition incites people increasingly toward violence, because a neutral attitude runs too great a risk of losing out. Information is carefully selected from a storehouse of interwoven facts in order to demonstrate that a particular class has been profoundly victimized by the social order; such a class is made to feel that in its distress it is lucky to have vigilant protectors.

A more direct propaganda, on a broader scale, was carried on in France during the last few years by an association called "La Libre Entreprise." Under the discreet leadership of large capitalist firms it published small pamphlets that were extremely well put together. They contained the type of truths that contradict the truth: truncated truths selected for the purpose of making the kind of profit that their authors wished to realize. Under the general title of *Voici les Faits* (Here are the Facts), the demands of the state and of social security were contrasted with the plight of their capitalist victims, particularly business enterprises.

Models of misrepresentation thanks to elisions, and widely circulated among businesses and small industries, these pamphlets undoubtedly constituted the principal ferment in the Poujadist explosion. And they were so much more successful than even their perpetrators had anticipated that suddenly they had to be toned down. They now began to discuss the need to protect the general welfare.

An even greater triumph and one that did not run the same risk was registered by the automobile industry. Its propaganda was so powerful, so inflated and clever that it not only succeeded in convincing those who, as victims, stood to gain, an accomplishment that is never very difficult, but in gaining acceptance as dogma among neutral or non-partisan elements. As a result, it was no longer possible to swim against the current. Whoever made an attempt to present the facts truthfully found no answering echo because minds were made up.

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN MEN AND FACTS

Under such conditions the political struggle takes this form: a) On the one hand, there are the facts, an ensemble of concrete realities which, without imposing a particular solution, condemn a great many others. b) On the other, men on the whole are ignorant of these facts, even when, in their ignorance, they either agree with them or oppose them. This is true of most members of parliament.

Between the facts and public opinion are the statesmen—a dangerous position. The intervening space is so great that they cannot find any satis-

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factory solution. If they follow the people they get discreet warnings from important government officials or other qualified people that indicate the depth of the abyss they have been skirting. If they follow facts they draw away from public opinion and from parliament and risk never achieving anything. As for important government officials or other champions of the general welfare, they are called inhuman technocrats or impractical dreamers by the defenders of private interests. Confronted with these difficulties, statesmen maneuver. With great difficulty and a little dishonesty they compromise. Yet, although they do not satisfy the people, they are unable to avoid financial or other disasters. Recourse to decree-laws, that convenient political expedient, is decidedly anti-democratic; if nonetheless it occurs so often it is because the essential condition of democracy—a well-informed public—has not been achieved. Governments oscillate between anarchy and technocracy.

TO COMMAND NATURE

One does not command nature, the saying goes, except by obeying it—in other words, by following its laws. Anyone who sets out to build a dam over a torrent without knowing something about hydraulic laws will certainly run the risk of seeing the torrent win out. Similarly, one can train horses only by taking into account their particular instincts and nature. Anyone who believes he can train a lion or a tiger in the same way as he would a horse or a dog will endanger his own life.

And yet, it is always in just this confused fashion that men in political life behave in regard to the facts. If they ignore or wish to ignore the most patent facts it is because everywhere they see them manipulated against their interests by their enemies: people of opposing political parties, administration, government, etc. Inevitably therefore the battle between doctrines alone predominates. Facts are forgotten; disillusionment is inescapable.

If, in France, power were to be given for a period of from eighteen months to two years to a well-intentioned man who didn't believe he knew everything, he would be successful even if he were very mediocre, so imposing is the list of counter-measures enforced out of ignorance or because of a desire to benefit a fraction of the people at the expense of all. Apart from the temporary respite, the system would, of course, resume again all the sins of authoritarianism, for the path would no longer be so clearly outlined by the importance of present errors.

III. AN ATTEMPT AT A SOLUTION

One by one, we could take all the French governments of the last fifteen years (and probably the governments of many other countries as well) and examine them analytically in the light of our retrospective judgment. The answer is all too easy to predict: how could I have taken such or such a measure without having been overthrown immediately, to the very real relief of public opinion? This argument, fair enough, gives the answer to everything. And, in the same spirit, the member of parliament can point out that his anxiety to be reelected, for which he is reproached, merely constitutes his sense of loyalty to the people who voted him into office and whom he represents.

All of these governments, in any case, are frequently accused of having done nothing to keep the sovereign people informed, at least in regard to basic problems. Many of them did not even take the trouble or the pains to give a truthful explanation of the reasons for their actions. Fearful of losing support, they preferred to switch the conversation from political matters to other subjects. Many plans for revising the constitution were presented, as if legal texts were endowed with all the virtues. No really significant plan was advanced that included the organization of a service to provide correct information to the public, or at least to those thirty or forty thousand people who play an active political role.

It is true that as soon as one goes beyond the desire for broad communication between the social categories and for closer contacts with the realists, one encounters formidable difficulties. Official information, already replete with serious deficiencies, has, to boot, a recent past that is highly charged. As so often happens under similar circumstances, excess tends to lead to the opposite extreme. Fear of propaganda inhibits the most worthy efforts. And yet a government would not be compromised if it were to attempt to enlighten public opinion directly, suitably, while preserving freedom as a whole.

In France, documents published by the informational services are often well prepared, objective, and concerned with important matters. But they can be objective because they scarcely touch upon the great, crucial problems that divide public opinion. If Frenchmen need to be informed about Brazil, the official information service can do an excellent job; it is in no great danger so long as the French are not split into rabid partisans or enemies of President Kubitschek. But it hesitates today to broach serious problems and, given the state of its organization, it is probably right. In

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England, through the Treasury's information service relayed by the press and other means, the government was in communication with public opinion and was able, thanks to this communication, to solve exceptionally difficult economic problems.

Speeches, press communiqués, or the reporters' gallery are other means of providing information. A government or a minister hands out a communiqué to the newspapers, or reporters may be called in and informed about plans for dealing with a certain problem. This is really an unsatisfactory procedure and one that does not get us very far, because newspapers not only interpret words in different ways, but also distort them.

A DELEGATION OF POWER

Since purely official information runs the risk of rapidly becoming merely a means of carrying on personal propaganda, information of a public nature should be the responsibility of an organ that enjoys a certain autonomy, that remains, to be sure, under the jurisdiction of the public administration, but in an elastic way (higher committees, etc.). There already exist so many such organs for dealing with this kind of situation that it should not be too difficult to find a solution. There can then be some kind of public information service responsible for presenting facts as objectively as possible, in contrast to a private, multiple, and motivated informational service.

The difficulty will be not so much one of setting up the system as of finding competent personnel, because the qualities required seem in contradiction with each other; yet they must be united in the same persons. People who know one subject perfectly, especially economics, are rare. Furthermore, some are personally motivated, while others are so completely technicians that they cannot express themselves in simple and understandable terms.

ATTRACTIVENESS, CLARITY, AND ACCURACY

If the project, for example, is to publish small pamphlets on a particular subject—white books, let us say—such tracts will have no chance of being read, and those that follow will fare likewise, if they fail to meet the following requirements: a) attractiveness: the pamphlet must be readable. A scientific dissertation which no one reads will serve no purpose; b) clarity: Readers of average education must be able to understand it without making a great effort. Clarity is not the same thing as attractiveness—far from

it. Very attractive, enticing pamphlets can still lack clarity; c) accuracy: Facts must not only be free from any distortion; they must be presented as accurately as possible and without any evidence of partisanship.

These three attributes are, in fact, mutually exclusive. The technician will say that equations and accounts are never very attractive to look at but that they can be presented only in their crude state. This objection is not a decisive one; on the contrary, it tends to encourage greater effort to satisfy the three requirements as well as possible.

But we must admit that instruction in composition, as it is given in the schools and universities—still mindful of the vogue long ago enjoyed by eloquence—does not lend itself in any way to the training of appropriate personnel.

AN EXTENDED RIGHT OF REPLY

An extremely efficacious means, almost the direct opposite of censorship, would be a considerable extension of the right of reply. This right, utilized if a person is attacked, would be extended to the representatives of an informational service in order to reestablish some truth that has been badly battered or systematically concealed. An essential obstacle would be overcome: that of reaching the least-informed public.

Newspapers of the extreme right that take advantage of their readers by telling them that there are about four million functionaries would be obliged to publish, at the same time, a factual account of the precise situation in France and in other countries.

Similarly, newspapers of the extreme left that question the actuality of any social progress would be obliged to insert a whole list of incontrovertible facts about the changes that have taken place over the last two generations.

A farm newspaper of corporative sympathies would have to reserve space for a list of the public subsidies that were granted in various forms, as well as the exact cost of the distillation and processing of alcohol.

A "truth column" would represent such a departure that its adoption would meet with considerable resistance. The present-day newspaper owner has great power, the power to inform, which is also the power to deceive. This power, for which at times a high price is paid, would be considerably reduced by a law; the adoption of such a measure would not be achieved without difficulties. But in any case, these are the things that one should work for: the right of reply; hence, positive information.

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Utopia? Perhaps. The essential thing is that it would lead to progress in communication between men—an indispensable prerequisite of democracy.

THE STAKE IS A HIGH ONE

Obviously, an extended effort will have to be made before one can achieve such a result. We must remind ourselves that democracy as a whole is at stake. As long as public opinion is deprived of a sufficient knowledge of the facts, more and more violent disturbances will take place.

A play given at the Grand Guignol before the war stresses (with little exaggeration) the dangers that threaten Western democracies, and perhaps other democracies as well. In this play, which features a combination of truly dramatic circumstances (the postulate of the Guignol) a deaf-mute is depicted alone in an institution for the blind. Everyone in the building is blind, with the exception of the deaf-mute, who has just been brought there by his mother. No communication is possible between the deaf-mute and the blind people. What happens from then on? Hearing an unusual noise, the blind people believe that a thief has entered the room; the deaf-mute watches them as, with groping gestures, they assume hostile attitudes. He tries to protect himself and to escape. In so doing he touches a blind man who screams and calls for help. The play ends amid a general and confused free-for-all in the course of which a blind man, somewhat overexcited, seizes a knife and puts out the deaf-mute's eyes just as the victim's mother returns.

The remarkable thing about this play is that, once you have accepted the postulate, the unfolding of the action is inexorably logical. The spectator has the impression that a struggle to the death is inevitable between these individuals who can find no point of contact.

We need not go to such lengths. However, because men are not well-informed, we witness daily a serious lack of understanding that leads to bloody and costly insurrections. If they were well-informed, there would of course still be a conflict of interests, but this conflict would not assume a violent form. Violence is always an indication of cumulative incomprehension and insufficient information.

THE SLIGHTEST CONSTRAINT

No society can function without some form of constraint. The desire to escape any form of compulsion springs from the delusion of our times.

When a large number of individuals live together, social restraints are the inevitable consequence of their reciprocal relationships. One can envisage many forms of constraint: long ago there was the kind that was imposed by the seigneur: royal absolutism. And afterward, in the nineteenth century, there was the unadulterated constraint of competition: constraint of a new type, and very severe, since it eliminated men and brought death in its wake. Constraint in Communist countries is of still another order: that enforced by an enlightened political party that has all the power in its hands.

The least painful of all constraints, it would appear, is the constraint of truth—an enlightened constraint; in other words, fully enlightened control over public opinion.

Thus, Paul Valéry's definition would be given the lie: "Politics is the art of preventing people from becoming involved in their own affairs."

As long as facts are not divulged, as long as those who possess some of the power can keep their administration secret, there will always be abuses, crises, regardless of whether the system is collectivist or capitalist. What is expressed by purges in a Communist regime is expressed by scandals, insurrections, and profound waste in ours.

If everything were done openly, possible abuses would be eliminated automatically instead of being permitted to fester like abscesses. But even if we cannot immediately achieve this ideal system of government, we ought at least to struggle toward it since it would enable us to realize the more communal life demanded by the evolution of technology, without suffering the rigors of real collectivism. The more afraid we are of the truth, of the light, the more personal constraints we will have to endure.

A true, total, but as yet chimerical democracy obviously can develop only through the application of these principles; without attaining utopia we can, at any rate, take steps in that direction. They would be amazingly fruitful, and for the first time we could really talk about democracy.

SOCIAL AND LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE

"Language is eminently a social phenomenon."¹ From the outset one should expect an interdependence of linguistic and social phenomena, as well as extremely complex relationships of action and reaction. In such matters, oversimplification can only lead to a dead end. On the other hand, a criticism of data that respects their true nature within the framework of their extreme complexity can pave the way for researches from which one may expect solid results so far as future progress is concerned. These researches are necessarily bound up with linguistics (the first human science which, while still very young, assumed a rigorous form), with psychology (better and better equipped and yet disarmed in the face of so many problems), and with sociology, that latecomer in developing well-based techniques, whose theorists still confront each other with diverse points of view.

An initial and essential observation was made by André G. Haudricourt

Translated by Elaine P. Halperin.

1. A. Meillet's preface in *L'Etat actuel des Etudes de Linguistique générale*, opening lecture. Collège de France, Feb. 1906; reprinted in *Linguistique historique et Linguistique générale* 1921 (2d ed., 1926; new ed., 1948), p. 16.

and Georges Granai:² language is intrinsic to society. Enclosed in an evolving society, language does not, of certainty, evolve independently, since it is part of this society; but rather, because of conditions proper to the "thing" that it is, modern linguistics must not be defined as an organism, but must be recognized as a structural system. Experts describe the structure as an agency of certain systems seen as a whole, with relationships that give rise to very subtle and engaging studies. An example of solidarity between the phonetic system of language and the grammatical system follows: if the phonetic evolution is such that the final syllables of words are weakened to the point of confusion or disappearance of certain vowels and consonants, the morphological distinctions cannot be made by means of different word endings (as for example in Latin declensions) unless, precisely at a given moment, the need to distinguish between certain cases, genders, or numbers brings about a strengthening of weakened vowels or consonants. (Such was the case of the *s* which denotes the plural in French. It is now mute, yet in Spanish it is always pronounced.)

Vocabulary itself is not amorphous. We must likewise mention lexicological systems—thus far inadequately studied. Many languages, for example, countenance only words of a strictly limited length, which is partly a consequence of phonetics. As a result, words that were originally long are only accepted in abbreviated form.

These few paragraphs are perhaps sufficient to make clear the risks that one inevitably runs in attempting to demonstrate a detailed relationship between social and linguistic data. This does not mean that we should limit ourselves to essaying general comparisons. On the contrary, it is quite probable that such a method would yield nothing solid. But if it seems useful to attempt a detailed study, we must be aware, before undertaking it, that a few partial results cannot justify any generalization.

To express this warning in practical terms, we might say that though it may be desirable to perceive how all linguistic data are contained within the framework of the history of social phenomena, in order to compile a rich catalogue resembling a small encyclopedia, yet, given the present state of linguistic, psychological, and sociological studies, it would be unwarranted to claim that one can achieve a manual of linguistic sociology.

We will now concentrate our efforts on research into structures. With some idea in mind of what is meant by linguistic structure, we should

2. "Linguistique et Sociologie," *Cahiers internationaux de Sociologie*, July-Dec., 1955.

like to define social structures briefly as being concerned essentially with the distributions of groups (families, clans, tribes, for example) and their hierarchy and order (matriarchal, patriarchal, elective authority, etc.).

In the course of the evolution of ethnography and sociology during the twentieth century, some comparative studies of structure have been attempted.

Wilhelm Schmidt, pioneer ethnographer, contributed greatly to the formulation of a doctrine on "areas of civilization" (*Kulturkreise*) defined by the concomitant existence of a small number of phenomena considered characteristic. He excluded the hypothesis of convergence in analogous situations. He wanted to take languages, with their internal characteristics, into account; hence the twin parts of his work on families and language areas.³ In the second part he had no hesitation in relating to each other details about the make-up of languages and societies. For example, the construction in which a determinative noun (complement) is placed before the determinate noun (*someone—house*), would belong to the oldest type of societies without a determinate agriculture or government. In a matriarchal, agricultural society a construction such as *house—appurtenance—someone* would be used. In a patriarchal society of conquering warriors, the following order would be adopted: *house—(of) someone*. This ambitious attempt met with very little approval.

Another abortive effort was made by N. Marr, who, with others, was erroneously accused of conforming to the principles of dialectical materialism. He arbitrarily contrasted types of languages which he termed "*stadiaux*" (of different stages) and to which, in defiance of any good historical approach, he attributed various survivals in modern or historically known languages. Marr's doctrine enjoyed prestige for a while, then it became the subject of a public discussion in the Soviet Union. It was rejected by various linguists as well as by Stalin, who added some general observations on sociology, and has now been entirely discarded.⁴

Like Ferdinand de Saussure, A. Meillet, the great linguist, was attracted to the study of language as a social phenomenon. He enrolled very early in the French sociological school of Durkheim and published in *Année Sociologique* a very important work which we will discuss later. He also gave precious counsel on prudence, but, we must state with regret, al-

3. P. W. Schmidt, *Die Sprachfamilien und Sprachenkreise der Erde* (Heidelberg, 1926), see in particular pp. 464-65. Review by Marcel Cohen in *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique*, Vol. 28, No. 84, 1928, pp. 10-21.

4. Columbia University Slavic Languages, *The Soviet Linguistic Controversy* (New York, Kings Crown Press, 1951); Stalin, *A Propos du Marxisme en Linguistique* (Paris, 1951).

lowed himself to be persuaded by an apparently seductive idea, one, in fact, that should have served as an example of imprudence. At the close of his history of Latin,⁵ after having remarked that in Indo-European languages in general and in Latin in particular, "the nominal notion did not have a fixed and definitive expression," he adds: "This can be accounted for by the important fact that the Indo-European language, serving as a medium for aristocrats anxious above all to be independent leaders, functioned with words which themselves possessed as much autonomy as possible." Should we believe that if the subjects or slaves of the aristocrats employed the same "autonomous" words, it was because they identified themselves with their masters or hoped to take their places? Or should we believe that many centuries later the feudal lords or the conquering explorers of Africa and America had such an attenuated spirit of authority that they were satisfied from that time on with substantives belonging to a fixed order in Spain and Portugal as well as in France?

Alf Sommerfelt, who has consistently been interested in defining and developing sociological linguistics, published a tremendously valuable essay on the language of the *Aranta* (or *Arunta* or *Aranda*) Australians in 1938.⁶ He decided upon a relative simplification of the phonetic system, one that seemed to correspond to the low level of Australian civilization. He noted the absence in the grammar of indications for such things as the quality of an object; this was also connected with the lack of subtlety in regard to abstract matters, but not specifically with social divisions. Only in the distribution of meanings in the vocabulary is there a certain relationship with institutions, particularly family institutions, but there are no characteristic relationships between institutions and the constitution of words. In his conclusion, the author warns that in any case there can be no question of characterizing socially either the phonemes themselves, the aggregations of phonemes of which words are composed, or, consequently, their transformations, should one study their evolution.

One problem, that of nominal classes, is deserving of a brief, special study. When the Melanesian languages were known, in which there are no indications of gender (masculine-feminine) but more complicated classifications into a certain number of categories according to the variations of grammatical characteristics, these categories were entitled "classes,"

5. A. Meillet, *Esquisse d'une Histoire de la Langue latine* (1st ed.; Paris, Hachette, 1928; 3d ed., 1933), Conclusion.

6. Alf Sommerfelt, *La Langue et la Société: Caractères sociaux d'une Langue de Type archaïque* (Oslo, Aschehoug, 1938).

and this very terminology immediately created a certain confusion with social divisions.⁷ The first studies of the Bantu language called particular attention to the grammatical "classificatory" phenomenon; one observes, actually, categorical affixes, repeated by grammatical pleonasm with all the elements of a sentence. For example, *ba*—"people in the plural"—in a sentence like: *baleke bana ba mfumu, bankaka ba mbote bankaka ba mbi, bafwiidi bau baakulu*—those boys of the leader—some good, the others bad, all of them died. ("The boys of the leader all died, the good as well as the bad.")⁸ The linguists concerned with the Indo-European languages were helped by these studies to perfect the notion of gender. A. Meillet in particular claimed that ancient Indo-European was essentially an animate-inanimate distinction, the sexual distinction representing a secondary division of the animate. Moreover, he as well as others believed that this rather simple division (1[a-b]-2) might be the remnant of an ancient and more complicated one. Among the Africanists, Lilius Homburger (who cannot be followed in all of her comparative studies) was the first to observe correctly that the divisions indicated by different affixes in the African languages possess at least as much abstract as concrete value; for example, distinctions between singular, collective plural, diminutive abstract nouns, nouns of manner, alongside of human, animal, object. She does not speak of classes but of "multiple asexual genders."⁹ Other Africanists finally began to wonder whether the multiplicity in this system might not be secondary, following in the wake of a more ancient simplicity. In any case, nothing remains that suggests a correspondence between grammatical distinctions and social divisions.

In a recent article, which demands discussion and amplification, E. Benveniste writes "that as one tries to compare language and society systematically, discordances appear."¹⁰

It is therefore legitimate to say that so far as a direct comparison be-

7. *Langues du Monde* (1st ed., 1924), p. 443 (according to A. Thalheimer). Also see p. 428 on the functioning of "numbers" of categories in the same languages.

8. *Langues du Monde* (2d ed., 1952), p. 860.

9. Lilius Homburger, *Les Préfixes nominaux dans les Parlers peul, haoussa et bantous* (Paris, Institut d'ethnologie, 1929); *Les Langues négro-africaines* (Paris, Payot, 1941), especially pp. 232-34. Besides the African languages see particularly E. Benveniste, "Remarques sur la Classification nominale en Burusaski" (langue du nord d l'Inde), in *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique*, Vol. 44 (1947-48).

10. E. Benveniste, "Tendances récentes en Linguistique général," *Journal de Psychologie normale et pathologique*, Jan.-June, 1954 (see especially p. 142 where, following the sentence cited in the text, the matter of "diffusions" is discussed).

tween linguistic and social structures is concerned, one comes up against a negative conclusion. This conclusion is further reinforced by the fact that no one has been able to determine typical linguistic constitutions which would correspond to limited use in a clan or tribe, or, on the contrary, to extensive use in a confederation of tribes, in a people more or less solidly organized, in a firmly constituted nation.

Linguists are in agreement on this point: if circumstances are favorable, uncultivated speech can become a cultural language without greatly changing its character even if it borrows many elements of its vocabulary and is more or less influenced in its syntax by languages of a civilization enjoying prestige in the same region of the globe.

Amid the extreme diversity of linguistic developments in the course of evolutions that constituted within each group or subgroup a particular language more or less profoundly differentiated from its neighbors, one frequently encounters, for example, diverse types of languages which correspond to societies that are on the whole of the same species, for example, in Europe, Hungarian, or Finnish between Germanic or Slavic. Inversely, singular resemblances can link languages belonging to civilizations that are distant both in time and space and that differ in many of their essential characteristics. A striking and picturesque example of this is the similarity of the periodic sentence in literary Latin and in Amharic, the official language of Abyssinia, which only recently has reached the written stage.

In order to get a better idea of the natural complexity of the phenomena that must be taken into account, we have only to remember that in regions where dialect is still spoken—countries that have mass education, of which France is a natural example—the linguistic fragmentation is such that villages a few miles apart in a homogeneous dialect area maintain their own linguistic individuality. This individuality is indicated by a few phonetic, morphological, syntactical, or lexiconological characteristics. Moreover, when one realizes that the evolutions under way are spread over a long period and that they have been consummated in some individuals or entire families whereas they have been retarded in others, it is certain that even a small milieu like a village is not homogeneous and that careful study will culminate in statistics dividing conservatives and innovators into diverse proportions. The French language furnishes very clear examples of this. Thus the articulation of the liquid *l* was rivalled by the simple *y* in Parisian working-class circles as early as the seventeenth century and only disappeared completely among well-spoken French people toward the end of the nineteenth century (it was recommended by Littré

in 1870 and yet he was a liberal); in some Poitevin villages it is still retained by a few people. In the same way, one can study the progressive and uneven transition in the provinces from the front or rolled *r* to the rear *r*, called Parisian or thick.

It is a good thing to remember that complications are not less frequent in other social phenomena, if one takes the trouble to observe them. Everyone finds it easy to think of the differences between the habits of city and country life, the clothes and the headdresses where there are survivals of this kind. But only a few ethnographers know (in the absence of detailed lists) the differences of equipment and gesture which they dictate throughout all the cantons of France. Furthermore, when one thinks in terms of evolutions, one can also see that old and new conditions are closely interrelated. An immediately striking example of this: a man driving his wife with a club, a normal sight in rural France during the seventeenth century, in our day can connote nothing other than exceptional brutality. But in this same contemporary world, although clubs are no longer in use and martinets have become very rare, parents who absolutely forbid each other to whip their children are still in the minority. Just as under all circumstances the smallest linguistic details should be observed and registered as much for our own use as for the sake of historical posterity, so the little facts of "microsociology" or detailed ethnography deserve to be collected, provided, however, that statistical appearances do not lead to the composition of falsified pictures—a disaster against which Maxime Rodinson has opportunely warned us.¹¹

As for the inconsidered coupling of detailed facts that are heterogeneous, we have already said that this must be resolutely avoided if one does not wish to hinder rather than facilitate research.

Are we up against such difficulties that we shall be forced to assume an entirely negative attitude about the whole problem? Not at all. But we must define with prudence the positive possibilities and their present limitations. External study (without indulging in what are, properly speaking, linguistic descriptions), demonstrates clashes between languages that often culminate in the disappearance of a number of them. Thus, the expansion of the French language at the expense of dialects is the consequence of well-determined social conditions.

In studying phenomena such as these in their totality it is advisable to think about how they can be understood and used significantly: a study of

11. Maxime Rodinson, "Ethnographie et Relativisme," *Nouvelle Critique*, No. 69, Nov., 1955.

this kind would constitute a chapter on linguistic sociology, or a way of viewing it, as Haudricourt and Granai have shown in the article previously cited.

The consequences of A. Meillet's famous work¹² have not yet been fully realized through the development of more advanced studies of this kind. His book delves deeply into both vocabulary and social divisions. If sailors did not have a special language of their own, words like *to arrive*, *to land*, would doubtless never have materialized; they have become part of our general vocabulary because sailors as a group were not isolated but were in constant contact with the larger community.

And so, if the linguist employs all his ingenuity and remains extremely cautious, he can achieve many small partial triumphs by examining social conditions in detail, just as the sociologist, by examining various linguistic data, can see certain social articulations assume concrete form before him. But this is not the way we can clarify the whole of social constitutions on the one hand, or of linguistics on the other.

Another avenue of research exists which we deliberately neglected in the preceding pages, although it was not possible to conceal it completely because of the diverse examples cited in which sociology seems to appear as a very young and fragile venture in comparative psychology.

We must go beyond the framework which the title of this article suggests in order to test precisely the validity of certain notions. On the one hand we must remember that language, that instrument of communication which lends itself to all the needs of society, and primarily to the needs of work in the production of those resources necessary to life, is also an expression of reasoned thought in its successive evolutions. On the other hand, when we envisage societies in large areas of civilizations, when we perceive them across the ages and the continents, we can speak of species and of levels of civilization in terms of concepts (in colloquial language: ways of seeing) which change perceptibly in the course of their evolution and which often have well-determined linguistic, or more precisely, grammatical expressions.

We must make one point very clear at this juncture: concepts are reflected in grammatical systems and imitate them more or less; it is not the grammatical systems that give rise to concepts.¹³

12. A. Meillet, "Comment les Mots changent de Sens," *Année sociologique*, 1905-1906; reprinted in *Linguistique historique et Linguistique générale*.

13. Marcel Cohen, "Faits linguistiques et Faits de Pensée," *Journal de Psychologie*, 1947; reprinted in abridged form in *Cinquante Années de Recherches*, 1955.

However, since languages are subject to special conditions of evolution in the midst of societies, linguistic systems do not become modified according to the rhythm of changing ideas, which themselves are never simple. Specifically, it can happen that the lexicon is basically renovated while the grammatical system shows only slight modifications; one must take the whole of the expression into account.

An initial example which has attracted attention is that of Melanesian languages and others in which different determinatives distinguish between what is part and extension of the person and what is possession of a distinct object: the result of an old conception of possession.¹⁴ This is the place for the more or less numerous classifications of "genders" which we discussed earlier: we are speaking of certain views about men, beings, and things.

Another important example is that of the counting of objects: in backward societies numbering practically does not exist nor does the abstract distinction between the singular and the plural; but grammatical techniques enable us to decipher pairs, trios, and groups of four in this unique whole.

As for conjugations, Meillet in particular helped to demonstrate that the grammatical distinction between the divisions of time in relation to the moment when one speaks (past, present, future) is secondary. This is especially true of Indo-European languages and it corresponds to a progress in abstraction comparable to the expression of more concrete notions of finished or unfinished, momentary or permanent action.¹⁵

We see how data of this nature can be related in a general way to the important data of civilization—not in simple relationships, because in observable systems there is always great complexity, particularly in regard to the intricacies of the old and the new.

Now that the field of investigation is wide open, we come back again, after a detour, to problems of structure. If we should say, for example, that advanced mathematical notions and a sense of time are to be found only in rather large societies where industry is well-developed, we would also be referring to societies that inevitably possess certain characteristics, like the division of labor and separate classes.

We must hope that both linguists and sociologists will obtain results

14. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, "L'Expression de la Possession dans les Langues mélanésiennes," *Mémoires de la Société de Linguistique*, XIX, 1916.

15. Marcel Cohen, "Aspect et Temps dans le Verbe," *Journal de Psychologie*, 1927 (with observations by A. Meillet).

from large, general studies as well as from more detailed ones such as we have undertaken in the preceding pages. But their achievements will be solid and fruitful only if they abstain from seeking simple relationships which cannot correspond to the complexity of true conditions.

GENERAL NOTE

The ideas developed here are to be found in less condensed and also less explicit form in a section of the author's book, *Pour une Sociologie du Langage*, which has just been published by Albin Michel (Second part: "Les Langages et les Groupes sociaux." Chapter II: "Constitutions et Transformations de Groupes et de Langages"). In this chapter will be found various references with rather long quotations; in the foregoing pages the documentation was reduced to a minimum. Moreover, certain of the ideas touched upon here, and some of the examples, appear in other chapters of the book.

A comparison could be made with two other works on the same subject. In 1953 Alf Sommerfelt gave a series of lectures at the University of Michigan; they were put together in book form: *Language, Society and Culture*, and will soon be published (Oslo, Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap, Vol. XVII, pp. 1-81).

B. A. Serebrennikov published in Russia a study on "Le Problème des Rapports des Faits linguistiques avec l'Histoire de la Société," in *Voprosy jazykoznaniia* ("Questions de Linguistique") (Moscow, 1953), I, pp. 34-51; translated into German in *Sowjetwissenschaftliche Abteilung* (Berlin, 1953), 5/6, pp. 848-68.

These three studies, undertaken independently at about the same time, agree upon essential points. It would be interesting to study certain of their divergences at some future date.

(The material in this essay was presented to the Institut français de sociologie at its meeting of November 26, 1955).

MODERN SOCIAL FORCES IN INDIAN FOLK SONGS

Indian villages are not yet industrialized. Influences of modern technology on village life come mostly from outside. Industrialization has affected the urban centers and is bringing about a change in the relationship between these centers and folk societies, thereby influencing the latter as well.

Indian folk communities have not been isolated societies like the primitive tribes. They were closely connected with non-industrial urban centers and together with them formed regional cultures.¹ Folk and urban cultures maintained a give and take relationship during the ages. "Folk tunes, regional songs and styles, even non-Indian melodies," says Professor D. P. Mukerji "were incorporated into the classical texture, and the new classical style in its turn was always affecting folk music a great deal." He continues: "Throughout the Muslim period, the exchange between *marga* (classical) and *desi* (folk, regional) styles continued."² In the field of litera-

1. This view of folk culture corresponds with that of George M. Foster in "What Is Folk Culture," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 55 (April-June, 1953), pp. 159-173.

2. *Indian Music* (Poona, Kutub Publishers), pp. 9, 12.

ture as well such a relationship existed. A great deal in the folk songs seems to have been borrowed from Hindu mythology, but the people have thoroughly reworked the stories and sometimes even the themes. Alha, the most popular ballad of northern India, is believed to be the work of Jagnik, the court poet of King Parmal. Great poets like Tulsidas and Kabir have powerfully influenced the folk songs, but they also drew from folk literature. Tulsidas composed some songs in Charchari or Chanchar, originally the style of folk songs connected with Holi, the color festival. Kabir in particular used a variety of folk styles.

Modern social forces rapidly transformed the nature of the urban elite and profoundly affected relations between the elite and folk culture, with the result that many of the links that connected them are disappearing. For example, the professional dancing girls who helped the process of reciprocal interaction between folk songs and sophisticated music and poetry have lost much of their importance. They used to cater to both urban and rural audiences. While they generally presented sophisticated songs before urban audiences and folk songs before rural gatherings, they also sang folk songs, like Kajri and Purbi, with certain modifications, before urban listeners and simple sophisticated pieces like Gazal, Thumri, and Ddra before rural listeners. The landed aristocracy—Rajas, Taluqdars, and Zamindars, whose courts were the seats of sophisticated music and poetry—patronized the dancing girls, who therefore remained in touch with the prevailing trends in those spheres. Now a new class consisting of businessmen, government officers and clerks, lawyers, teachers, and writers has replaced the landed aristocracy in the leading position in urban social life. This new class does not provide patronage to the dancing girls, who have therefore lost touch with modern sophisticated culture and art. The lyrics of modern poets like Nirala, Mahadevi Verma, and Sumitra Nandan Pant do not influence the songs of the dancing girls. Thus an important link between the two streams of art has been severed.

More important perhaps is the change in the world view and the way of life of the urban people. Before the impact of Western industrial culture urban and rural people shared a common value system and a common set of goals. Indeed, if the unity of values and goals be regarded as the most important criterion of folk culture,³ the culture of preindustrial Indian towns itself was predominantly of the folk type. The impact of the West has resulted in the growth of secular and individualistic tendencies in the

3. This seems to be the view of Arden A. King, "A Note on Emergent Folk Cultures and World Culture Change," *Social Forces*, Vol. 31 (March, 1953), pp. 234-37.

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city. The saint poets who were enjoyed by both city and village people no longer appeal to the former.

Since the city people often need to communicate with people of distant places, they tend to abandon their regional dialects and take to Khari Boli Hindi or English. This is an additional factor responsible for their separation from the folk culture of the region.

City life is undergoing a rapid change, while in the country the pace of change is much slower. Thus the dissimilarity between the two increases. But industrial urban culture is projecting itself with much greater intensity than the preindustrial, and threatening the very existence of folk culture. The spread of the new means of transport and communication, construction of roads and canals, recruitment for the army from rural areas, emigration of large numbers of villagers to industrial cities in search of employment, commerce, printing, the spread of education, political propaganda, religious reform movements, cinema, radio, and loudspeakers are exerting powerful influences on folk songs.

Modern means of transport such as the railway train, automobile, bicycle, steamer, ship, and the airplane have already secured a place for themselves in the folk songs. Of all these, the railway train has found the most frequent mention. The reason for this is obvious. The common Indian villager can neither dream of using an airplane nor of owning an automobile. Railway journeys, on the other hand, are not uncommon. Indeed, the young woman awaiting her lover who is expected to arrive on a train from some distant place is a recurring theme in folk songs. A Punjabi woman sings:

The wheat crop will be looked after,
The wheat crop has grown,
My love must be coming.
The wheat crop will be looked after,
Lamps have been lighted,
My love must have got down at the station.⁴

A Bhojpuri woman, possibly the wife of a railway employee, also awaits her husband:

The passenger train is late.
My lord has not yet come.

4. Devendra Satyarthi, *Bajat Ave Dhol* (New Delhi, Asia Prakashan, 1952), p. 83.

I served the food in a plate of gold,
I am tired of waiting for him.⁵

In many songs we find women expressing displeasure because railway trains carry away their loved ones. For example, a woman asks the booking clerk not to issue a ticket to her husband:

The train for Lahore has come,
Do not issue the ticket O Baboo,
This is our night of separation.⁶

Another woman is furious at the train itself:

O railway train, may God break you,
You took my darling away.⁷

Perhaps the most interesting song in this connection is the Avahdi version in which a woman calls the railway train her co-wife:

From the east came the railway train,
From the west came the steamer.
She has taken away my husband,
The train has become my co-wife,
She has taken away my husband.
The train is not my enemy, the steamer is not my enemy,
My enemy is money which makes him wander from land to land.
I do not feel hunger, I do not feel thirst, I feel love.
When I see your face I feel love for you.
A seer of wheat I shall eat throughout the year,
I shall not allow my husband to go,
I shall keep him before my eyes,
I shall not allow my husband to go.⁸

The woman at first accuses the train, but soon she realizes that poverty and not the train is the cause of her trouble. This is a country woman, musing on the part played by the new technology in making her miserable. The poor villager also grudges the railway fare. In a song he says that

5. Durga Shankar Prasad Singh, *Bhojpuri Lok-Geet Men Karun Ras* (Prayag, Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 1945), p. 206.

6. *Bajat Aye Dhol*, p. 83.

7. Devendra Satyarthi, *Bela Phool Adhi Rat* (Delhi, Rajhansa Prakashan, 1948), p. 365.

8. Devendra Satyarthi, *Dharti Gati Hai* (Delhi, Rajkamal Prakashan, 1948), p. 140.

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instead of buying food he spent his money on railway fare and thus became lean and thin.

Since the railway train shot out
Forests and hills have been cut down.
The money I had I gave to my legs,
To my stomach I gave the bones of my back.⁹

The Indian villager also felt that the English (the Firangi) were running the trains for their profit.

The Firangi with his greed for money
Makes the carriage of smoke fly.¹⁰

Not all songs, however, express dislike for the railway train. There are some which praise the English for bringing them.

O Firangi, may your sons live long,
You have reached the railways to the village.¹¹

We often find an expression of the wonder and awe that the railways excite among the village people. A Marathi folk song (Ovi) says:

The train has a large number of carriages.
The train runs on the rails without bullocks.¹²

The automobile, the railway train, and the airplane look so magnificent to the villager that in describing his beloved he often compares her with them. In a song sung near Delhi the gait of a woman is thus compared with the Hariyana Mail.

I saw a fair damsel standing on the road,
She shone like a sunbeam and looked as pretty as a flower of fireworks.
She wore a strange dignified look,
She carelessly chewed a betel-nut,
She was like an arrow from the bow
As she carried her small pitcher full of water.

9. Ram Naresh Tripathi, *Gram Sahitya* (Prayag, Hindi Mandir, 1951), Vol. I, p. 51.

10. Devendra Satyarthi, *Dhire Baho Ganga* (Delhi, Rajkamal Prakashan, 1948), p. 127.

11. *Dhire Baho Ganga*, p. 164.

12. *Bajat Ave Dhol*, p. 129.

Her sandals were cut in a flowery fashion,
Her muslin was prettily embroidered;
She wore a lady-like sari,
I saw it covering her fair body.
Her hair was fastened with clips and was full of fragrant oil.
O friends! She walked as fast as the Hariyana Mail.¹³

The song describes a modern, fashionable girl. One can guess that the fast pace of this emancipated lady so overwhelms the folk poet, accustomed to the slow, short-paced gait of the rural woman, as to remind him of the terrific speed of the mail train. In fact, even the men of the villages do not normally walk fast, for they are still free from the rush of industrial urban life. The charming figure of the maiden with a pitcher of water balanced either on her head or on her hip is described so often in folk songs that the folk poet finds it difficult to picture a pretty young woman without it, even the sophisticated damsel of this verse.

Another variant of the same song, also from Mr. Bansal's collection, tells us that:

Her sandals were cut in a flowery fashion,
Her muslin was prettily embroidered.
She was riding a Japanese lady's bicycle;
I saw her riding.

Songs genuinely folk in spirit, style, and content mention automobiles and bicycles. The description of the bridegroom's marriage party, a favorite theme of folk songs, often contains references to them. This is not surprising, since marriage parties have begun to use them in villages.

How nice looks the ceremony at the door.
The courtyard of the father-in-law looks very nice
When elephants come shining at the door.
The courtyard of the husband's elder brother looks very nice
When horses come trotting at the door.
The courtyard of the husband's younger brother looks very nice
When cycles come gleaming at the door.
The courtyard of my husband looks very nice
When the car comes calling at the door.¹⁴

13. Taken by Mr. R. N. Bansal on January 1, 1954, from Dhoom Singh, district Saharanpur.

14. Krishna Deva Upadhyaya, *Bhojpuri Gram Geet* (Prayag, Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 1948), Vol. 2, p. 152.

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The airplane is never referred to in songs as a means of transport, and the villager does not, in fact, think of it as such. Yet it excites his admiration. In a Braj song (Rasia) youth is compared with the British Raj and the flight of the airplane.¹⁵

Youth whirrs and rattles
Like the rule of the English.
Like the rule of the English,
Like the flight of the aeroplane.
Youth whirrs and rattles
Like the rule of the English.
Why should I apply collyrium to my eyes,
My eyes are killing even without it.
Youth whirrs and rattles
Like the rule of the English.
Whoever exchanges glances with me
Becomes my slave.
Youth whirrs and rattles
Like the rule of the English.
When one becomes aged nobody cares—
The world is for the youth.
Youth whirrs and rattles
Like the rule of the English.¹⁶

Songs describing war often refer to airplanes and ships. India has not yet undergone any major air-raid, but a minor one made by the Japanese on Calcutta during World War II has left its impress on oral poetry. People of distant places go to Calcutta to earn their living. The air-raid frightened them and this fear found expression in songs of the various languages, spoken by them. One of the songs in Avadhi says:

Airplanes are flying above,
Below the riot is fearful:

A Malvi song which seems to have been composed some time during World War I, describes the effects of war and expresses the wish that the war may come to an end.

O King of Germany do not fight with the English.
Cannon balls like lightning rain in the sea and on the ship.

15. This song is specially difficult to translate, for it has many examples of onomatopoeia.

16. *Bela Phoole Adhi Rat*, p. 73.

You have made green and yellow colors and Kumkum¹⁷ costly,
 You have made the price of red color rise; how am I to dye the clothes?
 O King of Germany do not fight with the English.
 You have made pulses costly and sugar scarce,
 You have made the price of ghee¹⁸ rise; how am I to taste delicious rice?
 O King of Germany do not fight with the English.¹⁹

The recruitment for army from rural areas has affected the folk songs a great deal. Naturally, the songs of areas like the Punjab and the hilly regions which provide recruits in large numbers have been affected more than those of other parts of the country. A Punjabi song sung with the Giddha folk dance says:

In days gone by travellers used to ask about the way;
 Now they ask where the war is raging.²⁰

In a long and pathetic Garhwali song a man returns home after a long time. His loyal wife fails to recognize him. The man tells his mother that he had joined the army and had gone to China and Japan.

The jogi²¹ fell down on the feet of his mother,
 His wife was taken aback.
 "O mother, I am your son,
 I have come home from a foreign land.
 I joined the army,
 I went to China and Japan.
 I served for nine years,
 I get a pension of nine Rupees."²²

New means of communication also find mention in some of the songs. The villager appreciates the facilities offered by the postal system.

Charming is the rule of the English,
 The postman goes from village to village.²³

17. Saffron used for toilet.

18. Butter clarified by boiling.

19. *Bajat Ave Dhol*, p. 67.

20. *Dhire Baho Ganga*, p. 32.

21. Saint.

22. *Bela Phoole Adhi Rat*, p. 54.

23. *Dhire Baho Ganga*, p. 164.

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Some songs also refer to the telegraph. The following song from western Uttar Pradesh suggests that the villagers regard the sending of telegrams to be a costly affair.

O my friend! My darling always remembers me though he is in a far off land.
This dark night may soon be over and he may soon come back to me.
O my friend! I sent him a telegram for ten Rupees,
I sent him five letters full of love.²⁴

The new means of communication have connected the Indian village with the international market. Thus far, Indian farming has primarily been for subsistence. Cash payments were relatively few. For some time, however, the villages have increasingly been exposed to price fluctuations. The great depression of the thirties hit the Indian peasantry hard. A Bundelkhandi folk song describes the misery caused by the fall in the price of *Junhariya*.²⁵

The revenue is being collected.
Junhariya now sells at a maund for a Rupee.
The Munshi²⁶ came, the Patwari²⁷ came,
And came the Tehsildar,²⁸
The attachment has begun.
Junahriya now sells at a maund for a Rupee.
My lahanga²⁹ has been sold, my shawl has been sold,
The blouse from my body has been sold,
Junahriya now sells at a maund for a Rupee.
The turban of my lord has been sold,
The whole house has been put to shame.
Junahriya now sells at a maund for a Rupee.³⁰

The Punjabi peasant also wished for a rise in the price of wheat:

O wheat! how I wish,
You were costly once again.³¹

24. Taken from Saroj, a 16-year-old Rajput girl of Saharanpur district by Mr. R. N. Bansal on March 13, 1954.

25. A kind of large millet.

26. The clerk.

27. A minor official who keeps village records.

28. An official who collects revenue.

29. Woman's garment similar to petticoat.

30. *Dharti Gati Hai*, p. 112.

31. *Dharti Gati Hai*, p. 13.

The excessive rise in prices during the last World War also became a cause of trouble for some villagers. An Ahir (cowherd) says in his Birha song:

The rise in the prices has made me forget my Birha song,
I have forgotten my Kajri song and my Kabir song.
The rising breasts of a fair damsel
No more cause a pang in my heart.³²

Increasing contacts with modern industrial civilization are undermining the old ways of life of the Indian countryside. Ideas and attitudes are undergoing a rapid and profound change and the importance of the acquisition of wealth is increasing. A Marathi folk song regrets the growth of this tendency.

Village life has been polluted, the beauty of the village is gone,
Even the big people have fallen prey to lust for money.³³

The hold of religion is lessening. A Punjabi song says:

God has died and deities have run away,
Only the Firangi rules.³⁴

The sanctity of the caste is also declining and the Brahman (priest) is no longer accorded the respect he used to have. This is expressed in an interesting way in an Avadhi song. Dashrath, the father of Ram, invites the Brahmins on the occasion of the birth of Ram, but they refuse to come. Dashrath says:

Let Kaliyuga come, let Kaliyuga come,
You will go begging from door to door and nobody will give you alms.³⁵

Kaliyuga is the fourth or the present age of the world according to Hindu scriptures. It is believed that, in Kaliyuga, faith in ancient values is bound to be lost. A Bhojpuri folk poet regrets that even the low castes have now begun to adopt forms of worship proper only for the high castes.

32. *Gram Sahitya*, Vol. I, p. 19.

33. *Bajat Av Dhol*, p. 128.

34. *Bela Phoole Adhi Rat*, p. 380.

35. Ram Kishori Srivastava, *Hindi Lok Geet* (Allahabad, 1946), p. 18.

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The pigs pollute the water of Ganga,
The Chamars³⁶ have become devotees,
With beads of tulsi³⁷ in his hand,
The Kalwar³⁸ counts Ram Ram.³⁹

New political and social ideas are also reaching the villages. India's struggle for freedom has left its impress on songs all over the country. Reference to Mahatma Gandhi occurs in folk songs of all the Indian languages. A Bhojpuri folk song predicts the doom of the British rule thus:

O Firangi! you will not win in your struggle against Gandhi,
Howsoever hard you may try.
You have enjoyed yourself well in this country,
Now your houses will be sold.⁴⁰

An Andhra song says:

Work the spinning wheel, O daughters,
Spin the cotton yarn, praying for the victory of Gandhi.⁴¹

There are signs of political and social ferment in the villages. The peasant protests against his miserable lot and is rising against the injustices done to him. Landlords used to collect various levies from their tenants. The following song refers to these:

How can there be a compromise?
Tell me, how can there be a compromise?
When I came to your house to pay the tax,
You charged the tax of granting audience.
Tell me, how can there be a compromise?
You brought a horse from Makkhanpur,
You charged the horse-tax.
Tell me, how can there be a compromise?
You brought an elephant from distant Chhattar,
You charged the elephant-tax.

36. Caste of leather-workers.

37. A plant regarded sacred by the Hindus.

38. The caste of wine-sellers.

39. *Bhojpuri Gram Geet*, Vol. I, p. 349.

40. *Bela Phool Adhi Rat*, pp. 399-400.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 396.

Tell me, how can there be a compromise?
You brought a car from Calcutta,
You charged the car-tax.
Tell me, how can there be a compromise?⁴²

The increase in rural population and the destruction of the village industries as a result of competition with the large-scale industries force many villagers to seek employment in industrial centers far away from their homes. Usually only male youths leave their homes and the rest of the family remains in the villages. This emigration greatly affects the life of the countryside. Nearly all types of folk songs carry the impress of the effects of emigration in regions where this takes place on a large scale. A Bhojpuri woman sadly sings:

The arhar⁴³ rots in the fields of arhar,
In the pitcher rots the flour,
The wife rots in her mother's home,
The husband rots in Calcutta.⁴⁴

During the absence of the husband the wife has to suffer many hardships. If the husband stays away from home for a long time, and if he does not send home large sums of money, his wife is ill-treated and even the essentials of life are begrudged her. Normally, since the joint-family system prevails, a woman expects support from the brothers of her husband, but his prolonged absence begins to put too much strain on the system. The following portion of a Bhojpuri song sung by women while grinding corn describes the situation well.

I cooked puris⁴⁵ for everybody and jauria⁴⁶ for the prince alone,
But the eatables became poison, as the prince went away to a foreign land.
My mother-in-law asked me "On whose earnings will you live?"
"My father-in-law's offspring is Lakhan Devar,⁴⁷ I shall live upon his earnings."
"I have a married woman myself," the Devar said.
I put my torn clothing under my arm, and started for the land of my father.

42. *Dhire Baho Ganga*, p. 172.

43. A cereal.

44. *Bhojpuri Lok Geet Men Karun Ras*, p. 195.

45. Thin cakes fried in clarified butter.

46. A pudding made of rice and milk.

47. Husband's younger brother.

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"O father, sitting in the meeting, I am your daughter in distress,
If you were to give me the fallen hut
I would pass my miserable days."
"The falling hut has fallen down,
O daughter, go to your mother."⁴⁸

During their long stay in the city away from their wives men often develop intimacies with other women and sometimes take them to their villages when they go back.

Wheat was sown but ankari⁴⁹ grew,
My lord laments sitting on the road.
"O lord, do not lament, do not kill yourself by lamenting,
I shall exchange ankari and grind wheat."
"My wife, you have become thin due to grinding and pounding,
If you like I shall bring a maid for you."
He went for a maid, but brought a co-wife,
How shall I send away the co-wife?⁵⁰

This Bhojpuri folk song also tells that the man went away from home because the crop had failed. As a matter of fact, folk songs from all over the country suggest that men are really not attracted by cities. They leave the countryside only when it becomes very difficult for them to earn their livelihood, as the following Braj folk song tells:

The locusts ate all the leaves of the jungle,
My husband went to Calcutta.
The locusts came and caused a havoc,
Not even torn clothes were left in my house.⁵¹

The songs show that the villager does not like the city atmosphere. The newcomer to an industrial city is faced with innumerable difficulties in a world completely unknown to him. Many songs express the nostalgia of these people. In the following, Birha an Ahir (cow-herd) is lamenting the loss of his old surroundings and occupation.

48. *Bhojpuri Lok Geet Men Karun Ras*, p. 123.

49. A kind of grass used as cattle fodder.

50. *Bhojpuri Gram Geet*, Vol. 2, p. 281.

51. *Bela Phool Adhi Rat*, p. 43.

The watching of cows is gone,
The bath in the Ganges is gone,
The gathering under the pakari tree is gone,
God has taken away all the three.⁵²

Some songs describe the new surroundings and the factories in which these emigrants go to work:

Hearing the siren of the mill, my husband jumps into my lap,
He works in the jute mill.
On the walls of bricks there is a roof of tin,
There are lots of leather ropes.⁵³

Though some folk songs contain descriptions of factories and mills, it appears that genuine industrial love has not yet developed in India. Many of the factory workers maintain relations with their villages and do not give up the rural modes of living and so feel themselves to be peasants. Though the songs pick up the names of some new objects, the themes, the compositional devices, the imagery, and the poetic diction have by no means changed radically. There have not yet emerged in India new heroes like Joe Magarac, the Slav hero of the Monongahela valley steel mills, "who made rails by squeezing the hot steel through his fingers—four rails from each hand—and jumped into the furnace to make better steel."⁵⁴ However, we cannot be quite sure of these conclusions since the collectors of Indian folk lore have not yet spent sufficient time in industrial centers.

The villagers who live in the city for a long time acquire urban manners and ways of living. Such people are often ridiculed in folk songs.

He has become a gentleman, my dear,
He has become a gentleman.
Twenty-four miles away he has built a bungalow,
In that he has kept a mem,⁵⁵ my dear,

52. Krishna Deva Uppadhyaya, *Bhojpuri Gram Geet* (Prayag, Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 1943), Vol. 1, p. 353.

53. *Bhojpuri Gram Geet*, Vol. 2, p. 316.

54. B. A. Botkin, "Industrial Lore," Funk and Wagnall's *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* (New York, 1950), Vol. 1, p. 522.

55. A term used for a European or Europeanized lady.

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He has put on a watch on a chain,
In his hand, my dear, he has taken a cane,
He has prepared his bed and got a prostitute,
He has started saying "good main."^{56, 57}

On the other hand, there are also songs which express the desire of common village folk to use modern amenities. The following Jhumar song, which is popular mostly among the women of the lower castes, serves as an example.

I am king's and queen's daughter,
I can have you fined.
Spread gravel on a pucca road,
On that goes my motor-car,
Get me news from Delhi,
Plant a garden,
Make a cuckoo sit in it,
Let me hear words of love.⁵⁸

Printing has not affected the Indian folk song as much as one might expect, in part because the writings of the modern Indian poets have scarcely reached the villages. This is true at least of the vast area covering several states in which Hindi is the language of sophisticated writing. The spirit and style of modern poetry have deviated so much from the old poetic tradition, partly due to the Western influence, that it has become incomprehensible for the common people in the villages. However, a large number of cheap song books have been published for rural consumption. They are sold in rural fairs and on footpaths in towns. But the writers of these books are not highly educated. Many of them can just read and write and have a predominantly rural background. Often such books contain songs of oral tradition with little change, which, when it occurs, is usually confined to diction. The producers of this rural literature are seldom acquainted with sophisticated poetry. The urban elite also remains almost completely unaware of their literary activity. Thus there is little chance of mutual exchange between the two types of poetry.

Bhikhari Thakur, the most popular folk writer of eastern Uttar Pradesh

56. A corrupt form of "good morning."

57. *Bhojpuri Lok Geet Men Karun Ras*, p. 188.

58. *Bhojpuri Gram Geet*, Vol. 1, p. 292.

and Bihar, who belongs to the Nai (barber) caste can serve as an example. When he was nine years old he was sent to a school, from which he soon returned without having learned anything. For some time he tended the cattle and later took to the profession of his caste and became a barber. Now he wanted to learn to read and write and took lessons from a boy of the Baniya caste. He was much interested in Ramlila, a religious folk drama. When he was thirty years old he started a dance-party of his own and through his songs and plays became known to millions of country people. Bhikhari cannot write chaste Khari Boli Hindi, which is the language of the city people of his region. His writings are not free from anachronisms, such as his mention of the firing of guns during the marriage celebrations of the epic hero Ram. Such anachronisms are common in literature of this type. Printed versions of the lay of Alha in many dialects mention the use of modern weapons such as bombs and pistols in wars fought in medieval times (about the twelfth century A.D.). Most of these versions are anonymous, a characteristic folk trait.

Thus the writers of books popular in the countryside are not much different from the common village folk and their writings are therefore not a serious threat to the spirit of folk literature. Yet some of these writers are responsible for introducing new political and social ideas in the villages, since they are generally more aware of the political and religious reform movements than the common villager. Pamphlets distributed by governmental agencies and political parties have also begun to exert some influence.

Due to oral transmission, the folk song is always being changed. When it is written down, this growth stops. The printing of popular songs must therefore check their normal development. However, printing can play this role only to a limited extent in India, since not many villagers can read. More than eighty per cent of Indians are non-literate, and this percentage must be still higher for the villages, so that even a printed song depends largely on oral transmission for its propagation. However, printing influences the folk song by making available to the villager songs of other places and dialects. Printing has also brought within the reach of the villager many old and new religious writings.

The film song is probably the most serious threat to the existence of folk songs as it becomes more and more popular, even in the villages. It is produced on a commercial basis for mass consumption, has simple words and tunes, and the villager can enjoy it far more than he can the sophisticated poems. The music and themes of many film songs are based on those

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of the folk songs, and these spurious folk songs especially attract the villager.

Not all villages get an opportunity to see a motion picture. Cinema houses have so far been confined to towns. But film songs reach the villages in many other ways. Radio receiving sets, wherever they have reached, have helped their spread. On festive occasions like marriage ceremonies records of film songs are often played on gramophones. The loudspeaker is often used, making them audible to a whole village. Film and radio songs, besides influencing the nature of folk songs, tend to reduce the part of the villager from that of an active participant to that of a passive auditor. Instead of singing for himself he now begins to depend more and more on the radio and the gramophone, which will inevitably lead to the decay of folk songs.

The direct effect of the machine on folk songs has not yet been felt much in India. Agriculture has not yet been mechanized and so the songs connected with sowing, weeding, and reaping have survived. However, the long and beautiful songs sung by women while grinding corn by the hand-worked mill (*Jant*) have suffered. The mechanized flour mill has reached the villages and the hand-worked mill is falling into disuse. Naturally, the songs sung while grinding are dying out. It has been said that the power driven flour mills, while grinding the corn, are also grinding (to destruction) the songs of *Jant*. Similarly, the songs sung at the time of crushing sugarcane with the old press (*kolhu*) are being forgotten. It is significant that modern industry in India, while destroying the old work songs, has not proved conducive to the growth of new ones. It would seem that the folk songs are unable to adapt themselves to the rapidly changing circumstances. Instead of being modified they are dying out.

NOTE: All translations of folk songs given in this text were made by the author.

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IV

This principle of the Torah as a living unit connects with the third principle we are now ready to discuss, that of the manifold and even infinite meanings of the Torah. The different limbs in the simile of the organism were frequently interpreted not as coordinate organs on the same level of importance, but as different layers of meaning, leading the mystical student of the Sacred Text from the outer and exoteric meaning to ever deeper strata of understanding. The idea of an organism becomes identified here with the idea of a living hierarchy of meanings.

The Kabbalistic conception meets here with another line of thought inherited from the Jewish philosophers, especially from those who wrote in Arabic and who were steeped in Arab philosophic tradition. It is well known that in this literature the dualism of the two layers of the holy text, the outer and the inner, had come to be considered of great importance. I need not go into detail here about the trend in the religious history of Islam, especially of its esoteric sects like the Ismailiyya, known as *Batiniyya*, who stressed the inner, allegoric or mystical meaning of the Koran, in

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contrast to the outward or simple meaning, which in the higher degrees of initiation became meaningless. It is interesting to note that the terms used by some Jewish philosophers to designate this dualism, *hitzon* and *penimi* (outer and inner), are not to be found in this connection in older Jewish sources but are exact translations of the Arabic terms used in this connection. There is no doubt concerning the fact that the terminology developed first in Islamic circles before it was taken over by Jewish philosophers. With the latter, the inner meaning was identified with the philosophic interpretation placed upon the text rather than with an esoteric or mystical understanding in its more precise sense.

This terminology was taken over by the Kabbalists in Spain and finally by the author of the Zohar who translated it into Aramaic. The principle of *ʿōraithā setīm ve-galyā* (the Torah is both hidden and revealed), esoteric and exoteric, is developed in many passages of the Zohar. The author sees this dualism, of course, not only in the Torah, but in each and every stratum of Being, from God Himself through all aspects of Creation.

It should not be forgotten that Spanish Kabbalists worked in a spiritual climate where ideas from the Christian surroundings and its specific religious tradition could find their way into Jewish circles as well. Two different outgrowths from the same ancient root come together here in the final development of Zoharic doctrine. This ancient root is, of course, Philo of Alexandria, from whom in the last analysis all these differentiations between the literal and spiritual sense have come down both to patristic and medieval Christianity as well as (through Christian oriental sources) to Islam.

The Zoharic doctrine of several layers of meaning, in fact, poses a problem, that of its possible connections with the similar but older teachings regarding the fourfold meaning of Scripture as expounded by Christian writers in the medieval period. Wilhelm Bacher in a valuable paper on Biblical exegesis in the Zohar held as early as sixty-five years ago that such a historical connection indeed existed.¹ Having no clear idea, however, about the precise nature of the several literary strata in the Zohar, he could not formulate his conclusions with that measure of precision which I think it is possible to attain now. Before discussing the position of the Zohar, however, another observation should be made. As was previously noted, the inner meaning of the Torah was identified by many Jewish philosophers with allegory. Indeed, many of their allegoric

1. Bacher, "L'Exegèse biblique dans le Zohar," *Revue des Etudes juives*, Vol. 22 (1891), pp. 33-46.

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expositions have a strong Philonic tinge. Ideas and teachings of a philosophic character are rediscovered in Scripture. Allegory in this sense, however, was not the backbone of Kabbalistic exegesis, which was symbolic in a stricter sense. What Kabbalistic exegesis detected beneath the literal sense of the Bible and its Talmudic interpretations is something else. Kabbalists find in Scripture not primarily a formulation of philosophic ideas, but rather symbolic representation of the hidden process of Divine life unfolding in the manifestations and emanations of the *Saphirot*. This theosophic interest is paramount with them. As to allegory, the Kabbalists are deeply divided in their attitude. An outstanding authority such as Nahmanides in his commentary on the Pentateuch consistently refrains from making any reference to allegoric interpretation in the ways of the philosophers. He undoubtedly was aware of the danger for the observance of Jewish ritual which could be engendered by the spiritualization of the Torah inherent in allegory. He gives explicit warning of such danger in a passage of his commentary (Deut. 29:29) for some reason missing in our editions.² No such danger was inherent, in his view, in the mystical interpretation of the Biblical text, where the mystery of the symbol had meaning only through the performance of the act of the commandment itself. Not all of the Kabbalists, however, took the same cautious attitude towards allegory. Many of them viewed it as a legitimate vehicle of interpretation. The author of the *Zohar* himself, as a matter of fact, although predominantly interested in the description of the hidden world of Divinity by means of mystical symbolism, does not exclude allegorical interpretations of certain parts of Scripture. Thus the Book of Jonah, as well as the stories of the Patriarchs, are interpreted by him, aside from theosophical meaning, as allegories of the fate of the human soul. The moment the inner interpretation of Scripture was seen to have two aspects, the allegoric and the mystic proper, the way was opened to conceive of the Torah as appearing in four different layers of meaning. Whereas Joseph Ibn 'Aqnin, pupil of Maimonides, consistently used three layers of interpretation in his *Commentary to Canticles*—literal, aggadic, and philosophic-allegoric—the Kabbalists now added a fourth layer, that of the theosophic mystery in its proper sense, frequently called in the *Zohar* *raza de mehemanuta* ("understanding according to the mystery of faith").

This idea of an essentially fourfold meaning of the Torah made its appearance at about the same time in three Kabbalistic writers at the end of

2. Cf. my Hebrew book on the beginnings of the Kabbalah, *Reshith ha-Rabbalah* (1948), p. 152.

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the thirteenth century, who probably belonged to the same circle. These are Moses de Leon, who is also the author of the main part of the Zohar, Bahya ben Asher, and Joseph Gikatila. The definitions given by them, however, to the fourfold meaning are in some ways at variance with one another. Most important, both intrinsically and from the point of view of its subsequent influence on the whole of Jewish mysticism, is the development which the fourfold layer of meaning has taken on in the Zoharic literature.

The oldest reference to this fourfold interpretation is to be found in the *Midrash Haneclam* on Ruth: "The words of the Torah are likened to a nut. How? He explained: Just as the nut has an external shell and the kernel within, so, too, does the word of the Torah contain fact (*ma'asseh*), midrash, haggadah, and mystery (*sod*), each being deeper (in meaning) than the preceding."³ This passage is remarkable in several ways. It does not make use as yet of any catchword or formula to designate the four layers. Nor does it make explicit the difference between *midrash* and *haggadah*, leaving the impression that *haggadah* refers to some allegoric or tropic form of interpretation, in contradistinction to the method used by the halakhists to extract their own distinctive interpretation, which is *midrash*. The comparison of the Torah with the nut is not novel in Jewish literature, having been used by the Hassidim of Germany and France in the early thirteenth century. It was a particularly suggestive comparison inasmuch as the nut was said to contain not only the hard outer shell, but also two more delicate inner covers shielding the kernel. The same simile, by the way, was used in the late twelfth century by the famous Calabrian monk and seer Joachim of Floris in his *Enchiridion in Apocalypsin*.⁴

The same sequence, but in a somewhat detailed explanation, appears in the main part of the Zohar, in a passage which has become a *locus classicus* with the Kabbalists: "The Torah is like unto a beautiful and stately damsel who is hidden in a secluded chamber of a palace and who has a lover of whom nobody knows but she. Out of his love for her he constantly passes by her gate, turning his eyes towards all sides to find her. She, knowing that he is always haunting the palace, what does she do? She opens a little door in her hidden palace, discloses for a moment her face to her lover, then swiftly hides it again. None but he notices it; but his

3. Zohar hadash (885) fol. 83 a. This earliest statement escaped Bacher's notice.

4. Ch. J. Ch. Huck, *Joachim von Floris und die joachitische Literatur* (1938), p. 291, *si ad nucis dulcedinem pervenire volumus, primo necesse est, ut amoveatur exterior cortex, secunda testa, et ita tercio loco perveniat ad nucleam*. Cf. also *ibid.*, p. 148.

heart and soul and all that is in him are drawn to her. . . . It is the same with the Torah, which reveals her hidden secrets only to those who love her. She knows that he who is wise of heart daily haunts the gates of her house. What does she do? She shows her face to him from the palace, giving him a sign, and straightway hides herself again. All those who are there do not know nor see anything save himself alone, and he is drawn to her with heart and soul and all his being. Thus the Torah reveals and hides itself, and through the signs of her own love arouses fresh love in her lover. Come and see: this is the way of the Torah. At first, when she begins to reveal herself to a man, she makes but a momentary sign to him. Should he understand, well and good; if not, then she sends for him and calls him 'simpleton,' saying to her messengers: 'Tell that simpleton to come here and converse with me,' as it is written: 'Whoso is a simpleton let him turn in hither' (Prov. 9:4). When he comes to her, from behind a curtain which she has spread for him, she begins to speak to him, words suitable to his mode of understanding until little by little insight comes to him, and this is called *derasha*. Then she speaks to him from behind a thinner veil words of allegoric riddle (*milin de hida*) and this goes by the name of *haggadah*. When at last he is familiar with her, she reveals herself to him face to face and converses with him about all her hidden mysteries which have been secreted in her heart from primordial days. Then such a man is perfect, a 'master of the Torah,' in its precise meaning, namely like the master of the house, since she has revealed to him all her mysteries, withholding and hiding nothing. She says to him: 'Do you recall the sign I gave you at first, how many mysteries it contained: such and such is the true meaning.' He realizes then that nothing may be added to nor taken from the words of the Torah. Then he realizes that the simple sense of the Torah opens up with all its hidden implications, no single letter being superfluous or lacking. Therefore men should pursue after the Torah, studying it with great precision, so that they may become her lovers, as has been described."⁵

This remarkable passage, saturated with the atmosphere of medieval knightly tradition, is an excellent exposition of the short statement in the *Midrash Hane'elam* on Ruth quoted before. It uses precisely the same terminology but substitutes the generally used term *peshat*, the term for literal or simple meaning, in place of *ma'aseh*, fact. A further step is taken

5. Zohar II, 99 a/b, translation based upon Simon and Sperling, Vol. 3, pp. 301-2. A penetrating and beautiful essay on the history of this parable in later Kabbalistic literature is found in F. Lachover, *'Al gebul ha-yashan we-he-hadash* (Jerusalem, 1951), pp. 29-78.

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in another passage (III, fol. 202 a), where the different layers expressly appear as parts of the organism of the Torah as the tree of life. Here, however, the old term *haggadah* is replaced by the new term *remez*, which in Medieval Hebrew parlance (under Arab influence) stands as a technical term for allegory. Here, also, in addition to these four layers of meaning, a fifth one is listed, that of numerological interpretation, *gematria*.

At this stage, the author had not yet hit upon a concise formula into which he could condense the whole idea. The above quotations from the Zohar were written between 1280 and 1286. Moses de Leon, however, after having completed the main part of the Zohar in pseudepigraphal garb, composed after the year 1286 a series of Kabbalistic works in Hebrew under his own name. In these he frequently gives further development to ideas first expounded in the Zohar. We know that before 1290 he composed a book called *Pardes* (literally, Paradise). This title is based upon a pun which later acquired great popularity and widest distribution in Hebrew literature. There is the famous Talmudic story of the four sages who dabbled in esoteric studies in the second century and of whom it is said in this connection "Four entered Paradise" (*Pardes*). These four were R. Akiba, Ben Zoma, Ben Azzai, and Aher. One looked and died, another looked and was struck, a third cut down the young plantings (i.e. became an apostate). Only R. Abiba entered in peace and left in peace." The precise meaning of the term *pardes* used in this story always intrigued speculative minds and I need not discuss here what was its true meaning in its original context in the Talmud. What counts for us is that Moses de Leon was the first to read this highly suggestive term as an abbreviation for the four layers of meaning in the Torah: *Peshat* (literal sense), *Remez* (allegorical sense), *Derush* (Talmudic and aggadic interpretation) *Sod* (mystic meaning). The *pardes* into which the four ancient rabbis entered came to mean speculations about the inner meaning of the Torah in all these four ways. It was combined by Moses de Leon himself in another book not long after with the idea of the nut, its shells and kernel. When sometime later on between 1295 and 1305, an anonymous author, probably a pupil or a member of Moses de Leon's circle, composed the latest parts of the Zoharic literature, namely the two works *Ra'ya Mehemna* ("The True Shepherd") and *Sepher Hatikkunim* (a book comprising seventy arrangements of interpretation to the first section of the Torah), he incorporated this new formula *pardes*, from which sources it later became generally known.

Commenting on the four rivers in Genesis flowing out of Paradise, he

gives a new twist to the old Talmudic story of the four who entered "Paradise": One entered the river Pishon, which is to be understood as *pī shōnē halākhōt* ("one who gives the precise meaning of the *halakha*," meaning here the literal sense, *peshat*). The second came into the river Gihon, which is interpreted as being composed of two words *had kal* (precise and swift), pointing to the sharp and swift expressions of Talmudic *derasha* (interpretation). The fourth entered the river Perat (Euphrates), interpreted to refer to the inner most kernel, the seed of life, which always bubbles forth new mysteries of meaning. Ben Zoma and Ben Azzai entered only the shells and thinner coverings of the Torah, and became entangled there, not being able to find their way. Only Rabbi Akiba penetrated into the kernel."⁶ The author of the *Ra'ya Mehemna* has made a still further change in the terminology. He uses the formula *pardes* in three additional passages, perhaps written somewhat later than the above quotation. He substitutes the term *re'iyot* (insights) for the *remez* (allegory).⁷

The author of the *Tikunim* identifies the Shekhina, the presence of God conceived as the last emanation or *Sephira* among the ten *Sephirot*, with the Torah in its full manifestation, comprising the fullness of all its meanings and all its layers of meaning. He could therefore say that the Shekhina is called the "Pardes of the Torah" (*Tikunim* in Zohar Hadash, fol. 102 d), and, in the same way as Moses de Leon, could combine this with the motif of the nut: "The Shekhina in exile is called *pardes* (namely, clothed in the four layers of meaning), but She Herself is the innermost kernel. This is why we call Her nut, and this is what King Solomon said when he entered the Paradise of mystical speculation 'I went down to the garden of nuts' " (Canticles 6:11).⁸ The precise meaning of the Shekhina in exile in this context will become clearer at a later point. Moses de Leon, in his *Book of the Rational Soul*, composed in 1290, connects the principle of *pardes* with the first principle discussed above, namely that of the whole Torah as the name of God. He says: "I composed a book with the name of *Pardes* in the mystery of the four ways to explain His precise Name. This is what is meant by the saying that four entered the *pardes*, which is nothing but *peshat*, *remez*, *derasha*, *sod*. In this book I commented on all these

6. Zohar, I, 26 b. The passage actually forms part of the *Tikunim*.

7. It seems to me that this reading *re'iyoth* is to be preferred to that of *re'ayath* (proofs, furnished by the interpretation) which does not fit into the given context. Bacher's conjecture that *re'ayoth* is but a corruption in our editions of the correct term *remez*, is refuted by the fact that the same interpretation of *pardes* is found in two other passages which escaped his attention, *Zohar hadash*, fols. 102 d and 107 c. (These passages are parts of the *Tikunei Zohar*.)

8. *Tikunim*, no. 24.

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matters in connection with the mystery of the tales and facts related in the Torah in order to show that all of them refer mystically to the eternal life, and that there is nothing which is not contained in the mystery of His Name."⁹

The same basic principle of the fourfold explanation is used consistently by Bahya ben Asher in his voluminous commentary on the Torah, composed around 1291 in Saragossa. Bahya does not use the term *remez*, but calls this allegorical method of interpretation, which with him is identical with interpretation according to the principles of medieval philosophy, by the name *derekh hā sekhel* ("the rational or intellectual way"). The catch-word *pardes*, however had not yet reached him, although in some of his explanations he shows that he had knowledge of several sections of the main part of the Zohar, published just at the time he started writing his commentary.

Still another way of portraying four layers of meaning is to be found in some fragmentary explanations to Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, perhaps correctly attributed to Joseph Gikatila. These were composed, at any rate, in the last part of the thirteenth century. He says: "The Torah can be explained in *three* ways, or even more." He calls these ways *perush*, *be^{ur}*, *peshet* and *derash*. *Perush* for him means the precise grammatical sense, analogous to what above was called *peshat*. *Peshet* refers to some kind of deeper penetration into the literal sense. *Derash* comprises for him both the Talmudic method of deducing the halakha from Scripture as well as allegory. The mystical sense is called by him *be^{ur}*. Literally, this word means no more than explanation, but by a mystical play on words characteristic of the Kabbalists it is connected with *be^{ur}*, the well, for the Torah is likened to a well of living waters which continuously brings forth fresh powers. A very similar idea occurs in the *Ra^{ya} Mehemna* whose author has read at least some of Gikatila's earlier writings. There we have the idea of the Torah as an inexhaustible well, which no pitcher (*kad*) can ever exhaust. The pitcher has the numerical value of twenty-four, and thus indicates that even the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible cannot fully exhaust the essential mystical Torah, the hidden Divine Being manifested through the Biblical books.¹⁰

This fourfold aspect of the Torah is strongly reminiscent of the similar ideas developed by early medieval Christian writers like Bede the Vener-

9. Moses de Leon, *Sepher ha-nephesh ha-hakkamah* (1608), near the end.

10. Zohar, II, 114 b, and Gikatila's commentaries published in the second part of Saul Cohen's questions to Isaac Abarbanel (Venice, 1574), fol. 21 a.

able (in the early eighth century), and who had a great vogue among Christian writers in later medieval times. The Christian writers spoke about history, allegory tropology (which to them meant moral interpretation), and anagogia (meaning mostly eschatological interpretation). What the Kabbalist writers would have called the mystical sense of Scripture could properly be included sometimes under the heading of allegory and at other times under that of anagogy. Well-known are the medieval Latin hexameters composed in the early fourteenth century by Nicolas of Lyra:

Litera gesta docet, quid credas, allegoria
Moralis quid agas, quo tendas, anagogia.

Should we assume a historic connection between the Christian and Kabbalistic conceptions in this respect? This has been a matter of controversy. Bacher, in his aforementioned essay, has assumed such a connection, whereas a recent writer, Perez Sandler, has tried to make a case for independent development of the Kabbalistic doctrine of *pardes*.¹¹ I would rather tend to agree with Bacher, although there could be of course the possibility that the four meanings were arrived at without outside influence by spitting up allegory into the two different aspects of philosophical and theosophical interpretation. But in the given circumstances, where the idea appears in Christian Spain in three books exactly at the same time, and given the fact that these writers adhere to a theory of four layers even though they are not consistent among themselves about their exact division, it seems that they must have formed a definite idea of *four* such ways. The Zoharic explanation of these is certainly surprisingly like the Christian formula. Gikatila, on the other hand, would have had no sufficient reason to introduce a differentiation between two ways of literal sense unless he had some previous interest in a fourfold aspect of the Torah.¹²

The crystallization of the idea of the four layers in the hierarchical organism of the Torah was not the only thesis the Zohar had to offer in this respect. There is another thesis that every word, nay every letter, has

11. P. Sandler, *Le ba'yath Pardes*, in the El Auerbach Jubilee volume (Jerusalem, 1955), pp. 222, 235.

12. It is worth while noting that the affinity of the Kabbalistic theory with that developed in Christian tradition had been already observed by Pico della Mirandola, the first Christian humanist who dealt extensively with Kabbalah. In his *Apologia*, composed in 1487, he says: "Just as there exists in our midst a fourfold way of expounding the Bible, the literal, the mystical or allegorical, the tropological and the anagogy, so, too, is it among the Hebrews. The literary sense is called among them *peshat*, the allegorical *midrash*, the tropological is

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seventy aspects (literally, "faces"). This is a principle not original with the Kabbalists. It is found in the late *Midrash Numeri Rabbah* (13. 15), being quoted already by the famous Bible commentator Abraham ibn Ezra (twelfth century) in his introduction to his commentary on the Torah. Although not found in the Talmud, it is in a way a development of a Talmudic motive. Seventy is the traditional number of the nations inhabiting the face of the earth. The Talmud states that every commandment that went out of the mouth of God at the Revelation on Mount Sinai divided itself and could be heard in all the seventy languages (B. Shabbat 88 b). The transition from this statement to the later statement about seventy aspects can be clearly seen in a passage of the *Alphabet of Rabbi Akiba*, a half-mystical treatise of the early post-Talmudic period, to which no real attention has been paid in connection with our problem. Here we read: "And all the treasures of wisdom are handed over to the angelic prince of wisdom Segan-zagael, and all were opened up to Moses on Sinai so that he was taught during the forty days he spent there the Torah in the seventy aspects of the seventy languages."¹³ Later the seventy languages were dropped, and the new formula was thus formed. The Zohar quotes it lavishly. The several aspects are the mysteries to be detected in every word: "Many lights shine within every word" (III, 202 a). The meaning of the holy text cannot be exhausted by any given number of them, and the number seventy here, of course, stands for the inexhaustible totality of the Divine words. The light, moreover, and the mystery of the Torah are one, for the Hebrew word *or* has the same numerical value as *raz*. When God said "Let there be light," he referred to the mystery shining in the Torah, as the author of the *Midrash Hane'elam* puts it.¹⁴

A striking application of this idea was made with regard to the Book Zohar itself by the famous Kabbalist Hayyim Vital (d. 1620). The name Zohar literally means Splendor. According to him, the splendor of the Divine light which shines in the Torah is reflected in its mysteries. When

called *sekhel*, and the most sublime and Divine among all of them" (*Opera*, ed. Basle, p. 178-79). The Hebrew terms are exactly those used by Bahya ben Asher, whose book must therefore have served as Pico's source for the statement. The erroneous identification of *midrash* with allegory and of *sekhel*, which actually represents allegory, with tropology points to the limits of Pico's knowledge of these sources. This mistaken identification is amplified in the *Apologia* which the Franciscan monk Archangelus de Bourgonova wrote for Pico. He lists midrashic literature under the heading of allegory, but books like those of Maimonides and Gersonides among the tropological.

13. *Othioth de-rabbi Akiba*, ed. Wertheimer (1914), p. 12.

14. Zohar I, 140 a; Zohar *hadash*, fol. 8 b.

these mysteries, however, put on the literal dress of the Talmudists, they became dark. The literal sense of the Torah is the darkness, but the Kabbalistic sense, the mystery, is the "Zohar" shining in every line of Scripture.¹⁵

This deprecation of the literal meaning in its simple sense is not novel with the later Kabbalists. It is already stressed in some quite outspoken passages in the Zohar itself: "Rabbi Simeon said: Woe to the man who regards the Torah as a book of mere tales and profane matters. If that were so, we could compose even in our day a Torah dealing with profane matters and of far greater excellence. As for worldly matters, even the princes of the world possess books of greater worth which we could use as a model for composing some such Torah. The Truth is that the Torah contains in all its words supernal truths and sublime mysteries. . . . Had the Torah not clothed Herself in the garments of this world, the world could not endure it. The stories of the Torah are thus only Her outer garments, and whoever looks upon that garment as being the Torah itself, woe to that man:—such a one will have no portion in the next world. The garments worn by a man are the most visible part of him, and foolish people looking at the man do not seem to see more in him than the garments. In truth, however, the pride of the garments is the body of the man, and the pride of the body is the soul. Similarly, the Torah has a body made up of the precepts of the Torah called *gufe Torah* ('bodies of the Torah'), and that body is enveloped in garments made up of stories of a wordly character. The foolish people only see the garment, which are the stories. Those who are somewhat wiser penetrate as far as the body, but the really wise, the servants of the supernal king, those who stood on Mount Sinai, do not pay regard except to the soul, which is the root-principle of the whole Torah. In the future, the same are destined to regard even the innermost soul on the Torah." The Torah, the author adds, needs an outer garment of stories and narratives just as wine cannot be kept save in a jar. But it behoves to penetrate beneath them.¹⁶

The last and most radical step in developing this principle of the infinite meaning of the Torah was taken in the later Kabbalism that flourished in the Palestinian school of Safed in the sixteenth century. Here we find the idea that the general totality of the souls of Israel, according to the traditional number leaving Egypt and receiving the Torah at Sinai, numbers

15. Vital, *Etz ha-da'ath* (Zolkiew, 1871), fols. 46-47.

16. Zohar III, 152 a; translation based on Simon and Sperling, vol. 5 (1934), pp. 211-12.

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600,000. "Now the Torah of the souls of Israel. Therefore, a corresponding number of 600,000 aspects and meanings is found in the Torah. Out of every single aspect of these 600,000 a special root of a soul in Israel has been fashioned. In times to come, every single one in Israel will read and know the Torah in accordance to that explanation which is singular to his root, from which he was created. This is also the way the souls in Paradise conceive of the Torah."¹⁷

The mystical idea that there is a peculiar way in which each single soul reads the Torah is already stressed by Moses Cordovero of Safed, who says that every one of the 600,000 holy souls has his own special portion in the Torah, "and no one other than he whose soul stems from there would be permitted to conceive that peculiar and individual understanding reserved to him."¹⁸ The Kabbalists of Safed developed out of the Zohar an additional idea that in some mysterious way the Torah which actually contains only about 340,000 letters contained mystically 600,000. Thus everyone in Israel has a letter in the mystical Torah to which his soul is bound and views the Torah in his individual way. Menahem Azariah of Fano says in his *Treatise of the Soul* that the Torah as it was originally engraved on the first tablets contained those 600,000 letters, and only after these were broken was the Torah given in its more restricted scope, which by some secret processes of letter combinations still points to the original number of 600,000 letters comprising the mystical body of the Torah.¹⁹

V

We have come to know three basic principles which may be said to govern the general outlook of the Kabbalists on the Torah. There is more, however, to this. In some Kabbalistic writings, a new turn is given to these ideas, giving them an even more daring aspect. Their common point of departure is twofold, arising out of two questions which came quite naturally to a pious and speculatively-minded Jew: 1) What would have been the content of the Torah, considered a supernal manifestation of Divine wisdom, had the fall of man not occurred? Stated even more radically, if the Torah was pre-existential, what was the way in which it

17. Luria, *Sepher ha-Kawwanoth* (Venice, 1620), fol. 53 b; more on this in Vital's *Sha'ar gilgulim*, ch. 17 (Jerusalem, 1912), fol. 17 b, and in Nathan Shapira's *Megalleh 'Amukoth* (1637), ch. 9.

18. Cordovero, *Derishah be-'inyanei mal'akhim*, ed. Margolioth (1945), p. 70.

19. *Ma'amar ha-nephesh* (Pjetkov, 1903), III, § 6, fol. 17 a, *Ma'mar*.

was constituted before the fall of Man? 2) What will be the structure of the Torah in the time of Redemption when man will be restored to his pristine state? As a matter of fact, these two questions are really one, namely, the relation of the Torah to the essential history of man. It is small wonder that this question has deeply intrigued some Kabbalists, and that their ideas on it have found broad resonance throughout Kabbalistic literature, wielding strong influence on the later development of Jewish mysticism, both in its more orthodox as well as in its heretical aspects.

Although the author of the main part of the Zohar did not himself raise questions of this kind, they were very much in the mind of his younger contemporary who wrote the *Ra'ya Mehemna* and the *Tikunei Zohar*. Two sets of ideas relevant in this connection are to be found in his books. According to him, there are two aspects of the Torah, the one called *Torah de-beri'ah* ("the Torah in the state of Creation"), and the other *Torah d'atziluth* ("Torah in the state of emanation"). The latter is characterized by the phrase of the Psalmist, "The Torah of the Lord is perfect," meaning that it is self-contained in its Divine character. The *Torah de-beri'ah*, however, is characterized by the phrase from Proverbs (8) "God created me at the beginning of this way." This is the Torah as it appears where God leaves the recesses of His being and is manifested in His created worlds.²⁰ In another passage he says: "There is a Torah to which the term Creation does not apply, but which is His Emanation." Only with regard to this *Torah d'atziluth* can it be said that He and She are one.²¹ The author does not develop this motive very much further, but in a third passage the connection of this double terminology with the second set of ideas developed by him in much greater length becomes apparent. Here we read that the *Torah de-beri'ah* is the outward garment of the Shekhinah.²² If man had not been destined to sin, the Shekhinah could have remained without covering. But now she is in need of such, like one who must conceal his poverty. Therefore, whoever sins now is like one who strips the Shekhinah of her garments, but he who performs the commandments of the Torah is like one who clothes the Shekhinah in her garments. It appears from this statement that what he calls *Torah de-beri'ah* is the Torah in its actual state of manifestation and as understood by Talmudic tradition, a Torah containing positive and negative command-

20. *Tikunei Zohar*, preface, fol. 6 b.

21. *Ibid.*, no. 22, fol. 64 a.

22. Zohar, I, 23 a/b, belonging to the *Tikunim*.

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ments, and which draws a clear line of demarcation between good and evil, clean and unclean, holy and profane, permitted and prohibited. This idea of the garments of the Torah reappears in these latest Zoharic writings in a great many passages, based upon the identification of the Shekhinah or Queen (Matrona) with the Torah as revealed to Man. Frequently it is said that the color of her garments after the fall of man, and more particularly during the period of Exile, is black, symbolizing her state of mourning. For the author, however, this dark clothing stands for the literal meaning (*peshat*). So, for instance, the *Ra'ya Mehemna* speaking about the Matrona being the Torah, says that the righteous man by his merits and good deeds brightens up the Shekhinah, "stripping Her of the somber garments of literalism and casuistry and adorning Her with brightly colored garments which are the mysteries of the Torah."²³ What is treated here as two types of garments, one representing the factual and pragmatic aspect, the other the contemplative and mystic, appears in many other passages under a different symbolism. We have already seen that the Torah was likened to a tree in Paradise. But there were, alas, two trees in Paradise, both of them pointing to two different spheres in the Divine realm. The one which was the tree of life was identified by the Kabbalists, even before the Zohar, with the written Torah, whereas the second, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, was identified with the Oral Torah. The written Torah, of course, refers principally to the absolute character of the Torah, whereas the Oral Torah is concerned with the ways and means the Torah is applied in our world. This is not so paradoxical as it may seem at first sight. To the Kabbalist the written Torah is indeed, as I have said before, an *absolutum* which in itself cannot be understood fully and directly by the human mind. It is tradition which makes the Torah understandable by delineating the ways and means of its application to Jewish life. For an orthodox Jew—and let us not forget again that the Kabbalists were consciously orthodox Jews—the written Torah alone, without the Oral Torah which is tradition, would be open to all kinds of heretical misinterpretation. It is the Oral Law that governs the conduct of the world of Judaism. It is easy to see how the equation of the Oral Torah with the Kabbalistic conception of the Shekhinah, seen as the Divine power governing and manifested in the community of Israel, came about.

The author of the *Ra'ya Mehemna* and the *Tikunim* gave a new turn to

23. Zohar, III, 215 b (*Ra'ya Mehemna*).

this symbolism. The tree of knowledge of good and evil suggests to him that sphere of the Torah which demarcates good from evil, pure from the impure, and so on. But it also suggests to him the power which evil can hold over good in the time of sin, and especially of exile. The tree of knowledge is the tree of limitations, prohibitions, and demarcations, whereas the tree of life is the tree of freedom, pointing not to duality, but to the unity of Divine life, unfettered by limitations, by the power of death, and all the other negative aspects which made their appearance in the world after the fall of man. We might say that the tree of life represents a Utopian aspect of the Torah. Only after the fall of man with its far-reaching consequences did the Torah take on those material and perforce limited aspects of which we have spoken. It was only a short step from here to consider the Torah under the aspect of the tree of life as the mystical Torah, and the tree of knowledge as the Torah as it is known in history. This, of course, is an excellent example of typological exegesis for which the author of the *Ra'ya Mehemna* had an outspoken predilection. But there is more to this. The author combines this duality of the trees with the duality of the two sets of the tablets given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. According to old Talmudic tradition, the venom of the serpent which had corrupted Eve, and through her all mankind, had lost its power at the time of Revelation, regaining it only after Israel had worshipped the golden calf. The Kabbalistic author interprets this in a new way. The first tablets, which were given before the sin of the golden calf occurred, came from the tree of life. The second, given after the first were broken, came from the tree of knowledge. The meaning of this is obvious. The first tablets contained a revelation of the Torah according to the original state of man, which would have been governed by the principle embodied in the tree of life. It would have been a purely spiritual Torah given to a world where everything was holy, and where the powers of uncleanness and death need not be fought against by means of prohibitions and limitations. The mystery would have been freely revealed. But that Utopian moment quickly evaporated. When the first tablets were broken, "the letters engraved on them flew away," that is to say, the spiritual element receded and is since visible only to the mystic who can still perceive them in the new clothes and outward garment which they took on in the second tablets.²⁴ These represent the Torah as a historic fact and power. It still has its hidden layers of infinite mysteries. The

24. Zohar, I, 26 b (*Tikunim*); II, 117 b, III, 124 b, 153 a, 255 a (all belonging to the *Ra'ya Mehemna*); *Tikunei Zohar*, nos. 56 and 60; *Zohar hadash*, fol. 106 c.

light is still shining through the aspect of good, whereas the aspect of evil is to be fought by all those commandments designed as a counter to it. This is the hard shell of the Torah, which, in a world governed by the power of evil, cannot be avoided. But the shell must not be taken for the whole. In the performance of the commandment, man can break through the external shell and reach the kernel. Incidentally, this may explain the somewhat ambiguous tenor of the many statements on the hierarchy of Bible, Mishnah, Talmud, and Kabbalah so abundant in the *Ra'ya Mehemna* and the *Tikunim*, which have baffled a good many readers of these texts. It would be wrong to speak of an antinomian and anti-Talmudist character of these passages.²⁵ for the author does not at all advocate the abrogation of Talmudic law, which, to him, is actually the historic form under which the Torah was given. But there can be but little doubt that in the time of redemption he looked forward to the revelation of that other Utopian and purely mystical aspect of the Torah of which I have spoken. The essential nature of the Torah is but one; it is that embodied in the concept of a *Torah d'atzilut*. But the aspect which it has taken on in a world in which it is necessary to fight the power of sin is a perfectly legitimate and, moreover, necessary one. The great stress laid by the author on those somber aspects of the Torah in its Talmudic garb shows how strong was his preoccupation with the mystical Utopian vision after all. The exile of the Shekhinah which began with the fall of man takes on its fullest meaning in the historic exile of the Jewish people. This is why the two intrinsically different conceptions of sin and of exile are so frequently combined in his Kabbalistic homilies.

The Kabbalists of the school of Safed in the sixteenth century developed this idea in a most interesting way. They tried to answer the questions of the character of the Torah before the fall of man and how this original structure could be reconciled with the concrete Torah of history. Excellent formulations of these ideas are to be found in the writings of Moses Cordovero (d. 1570) from where they were taken over by many other writers. He states²⁶ that the Torah in its innermost being is composed of Divine letters which are nothing but configurations of Divine light.

25. This was how H. Groetz in his "History of the Jews" understood them. A much deeper insight into the meaning of these statements has been gained by I. F. Baer's essay, "The Historical Background of the *Ra'ya Mehemna*, a chapter in the history of the religious-social movements in Castile during the 13th century" which appeared in Hebrew in the historical quarterly review *Zion*, vol. 5 (1940), pp. 1-44. Here the connection of these ideas with the Joachite movement of the Franciscan *spirituales* has been first brought to light.

26. Moses Cordovero, *Shi'ur Komah*, Warsaw, 1883, fol. 63 b.

Only in subsequent stages of progressing materialization do these letters combine in different ways. At first they form names, later they form appellations and derivatives, and still later these are combined in a new way to make words relating of worldly happenings and material things. Just as our present world acquired its crudely material character only as a consequence of the fall of man, so, too, did the Torah put on its material character in strict parallel to this change. The spiritual letters became material when the material character of the world required it. From this hypothesis, Cordovero answered the two questions: what was the nature of the Torah before the fall of man and what will it be like in Messianic times?

He illustrates his point by reference to the prohibition of wearing a mixture of wool and linen, called *sha'atnez*: "When the Torah says (Deut. 22:11): Thou shalt not wear *sha'atnez*, it could not have had application before Adam put on this base material clothing mystically called "skin of the serpent." The Torah, therefore, could not have contained this prohibition, for what connection does the spiritual soul garbed in a purely spiritual garment have to *sha'atnez*? Indeed, what was originally found in the combinations of the letters of the Torah before the fall of man was not *sha'atnez tzemeru-pishtim* but the same consonants in another combination, *satan az metzar u-tophsim*, the meaning of which was a warning to Adam not to exchange his garment of light for the garment of the serpent's skin symbolizing the demoniac powers called *satan 'az*. Further, these powers would certainly entail trouble and anguish to man, and would take possession of him (*ve-tofsim*), bringing him down to Hell. What brought about this change in the combination of the letters so that we now read *sha'atnez tzemer vpshtim*? Because when he put on the serpent's skin his being became material and required a Torah giving material commandments and a corresponding reading of the letters to convey such commandments. This applies as well in the same manner to all the other commandments based upon the corporeal and material nature of man."²⁷

The same source deals with the eschatological aspect of the same problem: "This is the meaning of the new interpretations of the Torah which God will reveal in time to come. For the Torah is always the same, except that at the beginning she took on the form of material combinations of letters, suitable for this material world, but in the time to come when men

27. Abraham Azulai, *Hesed le'Abraham* (1685), II, para. 27. The author made frequent use of a manuscript of Cordovero's work, *Elimah*, from which many of his most interesting statements have been drawn.

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will put off this material body of theirs and will be transfigured and attain that mystical body which was Adam's before he sinned. Then they will understand the mystery of the Torah when its hidden side will become revealed. And later, when man will be transfigured into an even more spiritual being, after the end of the sixth millennium (meaning after the Messianic redemption and the beginnings of the new aeon), he will understand ever-deeper layers of the mystery of the Torah in its hidden essence. Then every man will be able to discern the wonderful contents of the Torah and the secret combinations of its letters, through which he will understand much of the secret essence of the world. . . . For the basic principle in this exposition is that the Torah has taken on a material garment like man himself. And when man will ascend from his material garment (namely his bodily state) to a more subtle one, so, too, will the Torah be transfigured from its material appearance, and will be conceived in its spiritual essence in ever-deeper degrees. The hidden faces of the Torah will glow and the righteous will study them. But in all these stages the Torah will always be the same which it was at the beginning, remaining forever without changing."²⁸

This speculation combines in a very illuminating manner the orthodox insistence on the never-changing and absolute character of the Torah with its relativization in connection with the ways it is seen in the different periods of history. The same principle was applied to the way the Torah would be conceived in the higher hierarchies of being. The later Kabbalists spoke of four worlds forming such a spiritual hierarchy, the world of Divine emanation (*atzilut*), the world of creation (*beri'ah*), the world of formation (*yetzirah*), and the world of activation (*asiyah*). These worlds do not follow each other in time, but coexist, forming the different stages through which the creative power of God materializes. A revelation of His being must perforce have come to all of them, and as a matter of fact we learn several things about its structure. Thus texts originating in the school of Israel Saruk develop the following idea: In the highest world of *atzilut* the Torah was but an arrangement of all the combinations of the consonants forming the Hebrew alphabet. This was the primeval garment which originated and was spun out of the inner movement of joy which *Ensof*, the Infinite and Transcendent Hidden God, produced when first contemplating revealing His power. Here the Torah is found in its innermost elements, which in their primeval order contain the possibilities of

²⁸ *Ibid.*, II, para. 11, undoubtedly copied from the same source. Similar passages occur in Cordovero's published books, e.g., in *Shi'ur Komah*, fol. 85 d.

everything. Only in the second world does this Torah take on the appearance of a sequence of holy names of God, formed through a certain manner of combination of the elements which were present in the *atzilut*—world. In the third world the Torah appears as a unit of angelic names and powers, in accordance with the law of this third world, which is populated by angelic beings. Only in the fourth and last world could the Torah appear as it does to us.²⁹ The laws governing the inner order of each one of these worlds are revealed in the particular form in which the Torah appears in all these four worlds. The reason why we do not immediately perceive of the Torah in this capacity is of course because this aspect of it was hidden through the change in its appearance after the fall of man.

I think there is no more naturalistic and drastic form in which this mystic relativization of the Torah could be expressed than the fragment from one of the writings of Eliahu Cohen Itamari of Smyrna (c. 1700), which is quoted by Joseph Hayyim Azulai from a manuscript. Rabbi Eliahu was a renowned preacher and Kabbalist of ascetic piety, although his theology is strangely tinged with ideas that originated in the heretic Kabbalism of the followers of the pseudo-Messiah Sabbathai Zevi. This fragment seeks to explain why according to rabbinic law the Torah must be written without vocalization and punctuation. According to him, this fact "is an allusion to the state of the Torah as it existed before God and prior to its being given to the lower spheres. *For there were a number of letters before Him without any definite arrangement into words as it is now, because the actual order of the words would be dependent on the way this lower world would behave.* Because of Adam's sin, God arranged the letters before him into words which describe death and other matters such as the levirate marriage. But without sin there would have been no death. The same letters would have been arranged into words which would have told another tale. This is why the scroll of the Torah contains no vowel points and no punctuation and no accentuation, in allusion to the Torah as *originally a pile of letters without arrangement (tel shel othioth bilti mesuddaroth).* The Divine purpose shall be revealed when the Messiah will appear and swallow up death forever so that then no further application of these matters in the Torah pertaining to death, uncleanness, and so on will be necessary. For at that time God will cancel out the present combination of letters forming the words of our present Torah and will recombine letters

29. Naftali Bacharach, *Emek ha-melekh* (1648), fol. 4 a. Similar theories are developed in considerable length in many writings of the lurianic school, both in the authentic and apocryphal presentations of Luria's doctrine.

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of different words, resulting in new words telling of different matters. This is the meaning of Isaiah's words (51:4). "For a Torah will go forth from me," which was already interpreted by the ancient rabbis to mean: a new Torah shall come forth from me. Is then the Torah not eternal? The meaning is, however, that the Scroll of the Torah will be just as it is now, but God will instruct us to read it according to another order of letters, and will instruct us with regard to the division and combination of the words."³⁰ It is indeed difficult to imagine a more audacious statement of the principle involved in this theory, and it is small wonder that the pious Rabbi Hayim Joseph Azulai protested his horror against such radical interpretation. Curiously enough, he relies on Nahmanides' doctrine on the character of the primordial Torah in contradistinction to Eliahu Cohen's, which, as he says, as long as it does not prove to be authentic rabbinic tradition, has no validity for him. He did not see, apparently, the continuous line of development which led from the original conception found in Nahmanides to the ultimate logical consequence formulated by Eliahu Cohen. At any rate, it seems highly significant that a rabbi of recognized standing and great moral authority could accept such a radical conclusion as we have here, where an utterly spiritualistic and Utopian conception of the nature of the new Messianic Torah could be given a dogmatic foundation in a widely accepted principle.

It is even more remarkable that a formula very similar to Eliahu Cohen's was ascribed to Israel Ba'al Shem, the founder of the new Hasidic movement in Poland and Russia, in an early work coming from the circle of his younger contemporary and friend, R. Pinhas of Koretz.³¹

"Indeed the truth is that the Holy Torah was created at first only in an incoherent mixture of letters. By this is meant that all the letters found in our Holy Torah from the first words in Genesis till the last ones in Deuteronomy were not joined together to form the words we read there now, like 'In the beginning He created,' or 'Go thee from thy land,' and similarly. The truth is that all these letters of our Holy Torah were mixed together, and only when something happened in the world did these letters combine into words to tell the story of this event. Thus, when the creation of the world took place and the story of Adam and Eve took place, the letters drew near one to another to form the words telling of this story. Or when someone or another died, the letters combined to read

30. Azulai, *Devash le-phi* (Livorno, 1801), fol. 50 a.

31. The passage is first quoted in the collection *Ge'ullath Israel* (Ostrog, 1821), fol. 1d, 2 a.

'and so and so died.' So was it, too, with other things, when the event took place, instantly the letter combinations formed in accordance with the happening. Had different events taken place, the letters would of necessity have formed different combinations, for the Holy Torah is the wisdom of the Blessed God, and has no limits, and know you that."

Finally, it is also worth noting that this rather naturalistic doctrine on the original nature of the Torah reminds us very much of Democritus' theory of the atoms. The Greek term *stoicheion*, as well known, has the double meaning of "letter" and "element" or "atom." The different qualities of objects are to be explained, according to him, by the different movements of the same atoms. The parallel between the letters as elements of the linguistic world and the atoms as elements of reality has already been elaborated by Greek philosophers. When Aristotle put the idea in its succinct form: "It is the same letters from which tragedy and comedy originate,"³² he expressed the principle that recurs in this Kabbalistic theory of the Torah: the same letters in different combinations produce the different aspects of the universe.

VI

We have spoken of the principle of the relativization of the absolute Torah in its different manifestations through the essentially different periods of history. This principle has received an even wider application of a quite different character in another doctrine. This is the doctrine of the *shemitot* or cosmic cycles, a theory which, although not accepted by the authors of the Zohar, and therefore glossed over by them in silence, nevertheless occupied an important place, especially in the older Kabbalah, wielding a considerable influence even upon some later developments of Jewish mysticism. This doctrine found its classical formulation in a unique work which itself served as a source for an entire group of literature. This is the *Sepher Hatemunah*, the ambiguous title of which can be translated both as "The Book of Configuration" as well as the "Book of the Image." It is literary in its construction; it is a mystical exposition of the form of the Hebrew letters as configurations of Divine forces. These letters form at the same time, however, the mystic image of God as it appears in the world of the Sephirot. The book, the author of which remains unknown, was written in Catalonia some time around 1250. Al-

32. Aristoteles, *De generatione et corruptione*, 315 b, as an addition to his summing-up of Democritus' teaching.

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though the general principles of his doctrine are quite distinct and clear, its details are often difficult to grasp. The author chose to write in an enigmatic style full of Biblical associations and connotations that conceals more than it reveals. It would really be impossible to grasp the meaning of many passages were it not for the excellent paraphrase of the text found in a very ancient commentary, undoubtedly written one, or at most two, generations later by a Spanish Kabbalist who must have had at his disposal very good tradition as to the meaning of the book.

The doctrine as expounded in the Book *Temunah* constitutes in some ways a very interesting parallel to the teachings of Joachim of Floris, which, though formulated in southern Italy two generations earlier, has no historical connection with the Kabbalistic teaching. It is well known that Joachim proceeded from the assumption that just as the hidden power of Divinity expressed itself in Trinity, such Trinitarian rhythm was to be found in the three different cycles of the history of creation, in each one of which a different Person of Christian Trinity is dominant. Divinity reveals itself therefore in all its fullness through the totality of the three periods in history succeeding one another. The period of the Father is the world of the Old Testament or the rule of the Torah of Moses. The period of the Son brought the reign of Grace expressed through the Gospel and represented by the Catholic Church. The third period, whose arrival was considered imminent, would inaugurate the reign of the Holy Spirit in which all externals would be abrogated and the mystical content of the Gospels would become revealed.

In contradistinction to this doctrine in which the three periods of history expressing the Trinitarian structure of Divinity are placed within a single cosmic unity of the created universe and its history, the doctrine of the Book *Temunah* proceeds from a different conception. It teaches likewise that the hidden power of Divinity, which to the Kabbalists of course means the Sephirot, strives by its very nature to be expressed in the history of the universe. But this expression takes on another form. There is a sequence of different creations in each of which one of the various Sephirot is predominant. The creative power of every Sephira must find its complete actualization by prevailing over a cosmic unit whose law of being is regulated by the peculiar nature of this Sephira. A distinction, however, was made here between the three highest Sephirot and the seven lower ones. The three higher ones remain hidden and are not externally expressed in Creation. They did not build any worlds of their own, or, if they did, such worlds remained unknown even to the Kabbalist. It is only the seven

lower Sephirot, or Attributes of God, each one representing one of the seven days of Creation, which found their expression in a particular cosmic cycle of creation. Such a cycle constitutes a complete universe created from chaos and exists for seven thousand years, following which it returns to chaos, only to be rebuilt by the active power of the Sephira following in the hierarchy of Emanation.

Since the early Kabbalists found support for this doctrine in the Biblical prescription of a Sabbatical year (Deut., ch. 15), they called every such cosmic cycle by the name of *Shemittah*. Every one of the seven days of Creation was considered as corresponding to one thousand years, "a day of God." Equally, every year of the seven years forming the years of the cosmic *Shemittah* represents one thousand years. At the end of the seventh millennium which is the cosmic Sabbath, the world becomes void of living creatures and chaotic. Seven such cycles are therefore required to reveal the full cosmic power of Creation. At the conclusion of 49,000 years, in the Great Jubilee of the fiftieth millenium, all reality returns to its source in the world of Emanation. This follows the pattern of the Jubilee year prescribed by the Torah, whereby in the fiftieth year liberty is proclaimed throughout the land and everything returns to its original estate. It is easy to see that this theory is connected with earlier speculations which have had a long history both in oriental religion and Platonic philosophy. The teachings of the Ismailitic sect in Persia represent a very close analogy to the Kabbalistic theory, although the historic channels that may have connected them both are not yet explored.

The Book *Temunah*³³ gives a detailed analysis of this doctrine which is organically bound up with a mystical approach to the problem of the Torah with which we are concerned. There exists a higher Torah called the primordial Torah. This Torah is the Divine wisdom comprising within itself all processes of being in absolute spirituality. The letters of this primordial Torah were spiritually traced and were very subtle and hidden, "without form, figure, and boundary." Only in the next stage of Emanation is a differentiation introduced between these letters which at first formed an indistinct unity. Since a different pattern of Sephiratic influence predominates in every *Shemittah*, in accordance with the particular nature of each, no single *Shemittah* can reveal the full content of the power of God as it was expressed in His primordial wisdom. What was unfolded and engraved in a non-temporal way in God's wisdom had to unfold during

33. The best edition is the second one, Lwów, 1892.

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the temporal periods of cosmic creation and the historical processes of the different *Shemittoth*. Each *Shemittah* thus reveals one aspect of the Divine purpose laid down in the primordial Torah. Therefore, the particular inner law of each individual *Shemittah* finds expression in a revelation of an aspect of the Torah which is all its own. We can speak of the Torah of a given *Shemittah* without assuming a change of essence in the primordial Torah in which the different spiritual patterns of the *Shemittoth* are embodied. These different patterns simply become revealed in differing combinations and forms which constitute the letters of the Torah, their arrangement, and their division into words which all change from one cosmic cycle to the other. The thesis that there exists one absolute Torah which has an all-embracing and higher mystical being serves, therefore, as justification for its completely changing expressions in the various *Shemittahs*. The fundamental principle of the absolute and Divine character of the Torah is preserved, but in an interpretation which permits a completely new approach. The connection of this idea with the various conceptions expounded before is obvious, but so is the difference. It is not within the one unit between creation and redemption that the Torah changes in its aspects, but in the changing cycles of cosmic history.

What was said before about the change in the aspect of the Torah brought about by the fall of man as well as about its Utopian aspect in the period of Redemption appears in this doctrine in another and even more radical form. The author of the Book *Temunah* speaks in a general way about all the seven *Shemittahs* of our Jubilee. He is quite naturally fascinated by three of them. For it should be observed that according to him we are presently living in the second cycle of cosmic history. He is therefore interested in the *Shemittah* preceding ours as well as in that expected to follow. The character of the remaining *Shemittoth* and their particular Torahs remains rather blurred. The first *Shemittah* preceding our world was created by the power of *Hesed* (Grace or Loving Kindness). This world resembled somewhat the golden age of myth. It was a world of pure light. Everything was simple in its structure and not composed of the four elements as now. Man belonged to the highest spiritual rank and had a purified spiritual body. As a matter of fact, men were more or less what the angels are now. Even cattle and beasts then were on the level of the beasts of the Divine chariot, the *Merkabah* in our present world. Since the bodies and the souls did not undergo transmigration, and since there was no evil desire and no tempting serpent, their Torah too did not contain anything regarding limitation, prohibition, and uncleanness. The

primordial Torah was revealed then entirely under the aspect of Grace.

In contradistinction to this, our *aeon* expresses the Divine attribute of rigidity and severe judgment, *Din*. It is a world of limitations, of impurity and demonic forces, all of which are but the outcome of that process inaugurated by the principle of vigorous judgment. This our world is "the receptacle of all the dregs." No wonder gold is the metal most sought after now, for its red color symbolizes the quality of judgment, in contrast to the whiteness of silver which represents grace. Everything in our world is subservient to the harsh law and discipline of this *Shemittah*. This explains the fact that various forms of exile, and even of the exile of the soul which is transmigration, are essential to its history. But this explains also the special character of its Torah which comes to show man the way to serve God within the particular framework of this *Shemittah*. The existence of good and evil, of temptation and idolatrous worship, made it necessary that the Torah should contain positive and negative commandments about what is allowed and what is prohibited, and so on. Only isolated souls have come down to this *Shemittah* from the previous ones in order to mitigate the harshness of its law, like Enoch, Abraham, and Moses. In the present cycle even the most saintly are forced to be reincarnated in animals, and this is the mystery behind the special laws regulating slaughter. The author even tells that the letters of the Torah refused to combine in this peculiar manner and to be handed over into the hands of mortals, because they foresaw the law of the *Shemittah* and objected to coming down among the "rubble," upon which the edifice of this *Shemittah* is erected. "Therefore God made a covenant with them that (even in this *Shemittah*) His Great Name would join itself inseparably with them." Therefore, even our Torah contains "in a hidden and sublime higher language" the secret regulations governing this world of our *Shemittah*. And God explained all these mysteries contained in its letters to Moses, who, according to this instruction, wrote the Torah in his own language, but followed a higher pattern in its secret arrangement.

After the nightmare, as which the author more or less sees this world of history, the coming *Shemittah* is described as a return to Utopia. In contrast to the present existing differentiations of rank and state, everything will then be on an equal level. The Torah will again be concerned only with purity and holiness, the sacrifices prescribed in its commandments will be purely spiritual and consist only of thanksgiving and love offerings. There will be no transmigration of souls and no tarnishment of either body or soul. The entire world will be in as perfect a state as was the Garden

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of Eden. The Evil Desire will have lost its drive for sin and will be transfigured. Men will hover about like the angels having converse with God. There will be a continuous state of beatific vision "without veil." Basically, this is the same vision of the Torah and its function as we found it above in the conception of the Torah coming from the "tree of life" and the state of creation corresponding to it. But the Book Temunah did not shrink from consequences which the author of the *Ra'ya Mehemna* either did not share or did not dare to express. The historian of religion will be impressed by the manner in which this doctrine combined strictly traditionalist adherence to the letter of the Torah given at Mt. Sinai with a vision of this same Torah changing in its appearances in the other *Shemittahs*. Here we have unequivocal Utopian antinomianism. The opinion of the author of the Book Temunah (fol. 62) that "what is prohibited below is permitted above" leads to the logical conclusion that things prohibited in the present *Shemittah* and according to the present reading of the Torah will become permissible or even positive commandments in another *aeon* when a different Divine attribute, for instance, Mercy instead of Judgment, will determine the structure and character of creation. Indeed, this Book, as well as some other writings following its lead, contains remarkable views concerning the appearance of the Torah in its various states of revelation, views the potential antinomian quality which it would be difficult to deny.

Two thoughts deserve special notice in this connection. The Kabbalists of this brand stated quite frequently that one letter of the Torah is missing in our particular *Shemittah*. There are two explanations of what "missing" in this connection may mean. One view—it seems that this view was shared by the author of the Book Temunah himself—holds that one particular letter of the alphabet is incomplete and deficient in its present form, in contrast to its completeness both in the previous *Shemittah* as well as in that to come. Since every letter in its peculiar configuration represents a concentration of Divine power, the deficiency in the now-existing form implies that the power of severe judgment predominant in our world limits the activity of the hidden lights and does not permit them to reveal themselves in their entirety. The limitations of our life show that there is something lacking which will be reintegrated only in another state of things. This deficient letter, in the opinion of these Kabbalists, is the letter *shin*, which is presently written with three heads, but which in its full form should have four, a hint of which they saw in the Talmudic prescription for engraving both types of *shin* upon the phylactery worn upon the head. But another view regarding this missing letter held that one letter is

indeed completely missing from our alphabet, not appearing at all during our *Shemittah*, and therefore is lacking in the Torah as well. The tremendous implications of such a view are obvious. The full Divine alphabet, and of course the full Torah too, was based upon a sequence of twenty-three letters, one of which has become invisible to us and will be revealed again only in the *Shemittah to come*.³⁴ Only because this particular letter vanished, do we presently read our Torah as containing negative commandments as well as positive.³⁵ Every negative aspect of Revelation is linked with this missing letter of the primordial alphabet.

The second idea basing itself upon a Talmudic passage³⁶ states that the complete Torah really contains seven books, one for each of the seven Sephirot which prevail in the seven cosmic cycles. Only during our present *Shemittah* has this heptateuch become a pentateuch because one book, that of Numbers, is considered to be made up of three. The middle one of these three has been contracted now to the point where only an allusion to it remains in a mere two verses. Joshua ibn Shu'eib, a famous Spanish rabbi of the early fourteenth century, could reconcile this view with his perfectly orthodox conviction. According to him, in the future when the power inherent in the Torah will expand again, and we shall perceive seven books.³⁷ The author of the Book Temunah says expressly that one book is no more seen, "for the Torah which it contained and its light which was previously shining have already departed." There is also an opinion that the first chapter of the Torah containing an allusion to a *Shemittah* completely made alight without darkness is a remnant of a fuller Torah, given to the *Shemittah*³⁸ of Grace and Loving Kindness and denied to the present one.

Within the framework of this doctrine, there undoubtedly existed various possibilities for heretical and antinomian developments of mysticism. If an unveiling of letters or books which would change the entire appearance of the Torah was considered possible without making any change in its true essence, all kinds of things could happen. At the same time, these Kabbalists took a very strong stand upon the absolute authority of our Torah during the time of our *Shemittah* and did not contemplate the possibility that such a change could be brought about without a cosmic

34. Quoted from one of the writings of the Temunah group by David ibn Zimva, *Magen David* (Amsterdam, 1713), fol. 47 b.

35. In another text of this group, Ms. Vatican. Hebr., 223, fol. 197 a.

36. In *Sabbath*, fol. 116 a.

37. Ibn Shu'eib, *Devashoth* (Krakow, 1573), fol. 63 a.

38. *Temunah*, fol. 31 a.

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cataclysm linked to the emergence of a new *Shemittah*. The antinomian Utopia was left entirely to a realm of history outside our present scope. The one step that could change all of this was to establish the transition from one dominant Sefirah to another, and therefore from one *Shemittah* to a succeeding one, within historic time. It is very noteworthy that such a transition was actually envisaged by a Kabbalist of a most conservative and strictly orthodox bent, Rabbi Mordecai Yaffe in Lublin who wrote at the end of the sixteenth century. In his opinion, the present *Shemittah* began indeed at the time the Torah was given, and all the generations previous to this event belonged to the *Shemittah* of Grace.³⁹ No new creation of Heaven and Earth was necessary to effect this transition. If this opinion was debatable in the sixteenth century without anyone taking offense, we can hardly be surprised that similar ideas of an even more radical and actually subversive character made their appearance in the wake of the great Messianic outbreak that took place in the seventeenth century and was centered around the pseudo-Messiah Sabbathai Zevi and his followers. They also held that a new *Shemittah* might begin with Redemption and that the Torah governing the new aeon might actually be revealed by the Messiah, implying a radical subversion of the ancient Law.

In this connection, we should return a last time to the concept of *Torah d'atzilut*, the state of the Torah in its highest revelation, of which we spoke. This idea was known in the circle of the Book Temunah, but it was not connected there directly with the doctrine of the various aspects of the Torah in the *Shemittah*. It is said for instance that the angels received their understanding of the Torah from the *Torah of Atzilut* and taught it with all its secret implications to Moses when he ascended into Heaven to receive the Torah.⁴⁰ *Torah d'atzilut* is therefore the Torah in its pure essence or even the Torah in its Kabbalistic aspect, but not the Torah of a given aeon or *Shemittah*.

What happened in the great outbreak of spiritualist Messianism in which the radical wing of the Sabbathaian movement indulged presents a striking parallel to what happened to the doctrine of Joachim of Floris when the radical spiritualists of the Franciscan Order took it over in the middle of the thirteenth century. What Joachim of Floris called the *Evangelium Aeternum*, the Eternal Gospel, is essentially what the Kabbalists called *Torah d'atzilut*. Joachim understood the term as identical with the *intellectus mysticus*, the mystical meaning which in the third period of history would be revealed and substituted for the literal sense of the Gospel. This is

39. M. Yaffe, *Lebush ḥor Yekavoth* (Lwów, 1881), II, fol. 8 d.

40. Cf. *Sod ilan ha-atziluth*, edited by me from a Vatican manuscript, Jerusalem, 1951, p. 94.

what the Kabbalists before the Sabbathaian movement saw in the *Torah d'atzilut*. But the Franciscan followers of Joachim identified the writings of Joachim himself with the *Evangelium Aeternum* which they considered a new revelation of the Holy Spirit. This is exactly what happened to the concept of *Torah d'atzilut* in the Sabbathaian movement. The teachings of the antinomians, who took their clue from Sabbathai Zevi and some of his prophets in Salonica, were themselves considered as the new *Torah d'atzilut* brought down by Sabbathai Zevi and abrogating the old *Torah de-beri'ah*, identified with the Torah of the pre-Messianic aeon. The mystical content of the Torah broke away from its linking to the traditional reading of the Torah and acquired an independent and autonomous state where it was no longer expressed by the symbols of traditional Jewish life. Rather did it become opposed to them: the observance and performance of the new spiritual Torah depended now upon, and was carried out by, the abrogation of the *Torah de-beri'ah*, meaning now pure and simple Rabbinic Judaism.

This identification of the *Torah d'atzilut* with the Torah of the new aeon common to the more radical Sabbathaian sectarians has found no more clear-cut formulation than in the book *Shaare Gan Eden*, written during the early part of the eighteenth century by Jacob Koppel Lifschitz, a Volynian Kabbalist who succeeded in expressing and propagating almost each and every theological tenet of Sabbathaianism by putting into the preface of his book a fierce and obviously not quite serious denunciation of the sectarians and their secret doctrines which he himself followed! He says:

"In this our *Shemittah* the commandments of the Torah are a Divine necessity. . . . This Torah is called *Torah of Beriah* and not *Torah of Atzilut*. For in this *Shemittah* all the works of creation come from a sphere from where they combine in a way suitable to the law of the *Shemittah*. This is why we speak of the *Torah of Creation*. But in the previous *Shemittah*, which was one of Grace, and in which there was neither Evil Desire nor reward and punishment, another cosmic law necessarily prevailed. The words of the Torah were woven to correspond to the needs of that particular cosmic law. . . . But the actions which bring about the reappearance of the previous *Shemittah* at the rejuvenation of the world flow from an even higher sphere, namely, the Divine wisdom. In correspondence to it, the Torah (to be revealed in the new aeon) is called *Torah of Atzilut*. . . . At the end of the sixth millennium, when the light preceding the cosmic Sabbath will spread its rays . . . then many commandments will become obsolete, and at the end of our *Shemittah* new laws governing this

special period will be required, just as is explained in the Book Temunah. With reference to this new time it is said 'A new Torah will proceed' (from God). Not that the Torah will be replaced, for then this would entail the abrogation of one of the thirteen great 'principles of faith' stated by Maimonides. But the letters of the Torah will combine to form other words in another text, in accordance with the special needs of the end of the *Shemittah*. . . . We need not enlarge upon it here, as all these things are clearly stated in the Book Temunah, as you will find there."⁴¹

Tishby, who was the first to analyze the double-talk involved in this theory, has quite rightly pointed out that of course the Book Temunah contains nothing of this sort.⁴² We have seen how far its teachings went. But only the Messianic convictions of the present author led him to read into the Book Temunah the conception of a special law of the end of the *Shemittah*, thus explaining how the transition from the *Torah de-beri'ah* to the *Torah d'atzilut* could be effected even in our present *Shemittah*! Of course, the heretical Kabbalists of the Sabbathaian sect could have quite rightly invoked the authority of Cordovero and his followers about the eschatological changes to take place in the reading of the Torah, which we have analyzed before. It should be said in truth that Kabbalistic speculation had indeed prepared the way and the conceptual tools for such a new interpretation, without being aware of the antinomian possibilities involved in their views.

Having completed our exposition, we may say this: in tracing the full course of the development of some basic ideas of the Kabbalists regarding the mystical essence of the Torah, we have seen how great a stimulus such basic ideas were to the development of the mystical theology of Judaism. Moreover, we cannot but wonder at the astounding vigor with which they were formulated and developed. In one form or another you will find some of the ideas which I have traced from their first sources, and in their most concise and classical formulations, in literally thousands of books of almost every type of later Hebrew literature. Sometimes the sharp edges which are not lacking in the Kabbalistic formulations we have discussed have been blunted and the high pitch of the writing has been toned down. Their fundamental importance remains, however, for an understanding of many aspects of Jewish literature.

41. Jacob K. Lifschitz, *Sha'arí Gan 'Eden* (Krakow, 1880), fol. 12 c.

42. Tishby in *Keneseth*, vol. IX (Jerusalem, 1945), pp. 252-54.

NOTES AND DISCUSSION

George Cœdès

THE TWENTY-FIVE-HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BUDDHA

The full moon in May is the occasion of the greatest festival of the year in the Buddhist world, it being the triple anniversary of the birth of Sakya-muni, of his ascent to the omniscience of a Buddha, and of his final extinction in Parinirvana. Ceylon and the countries of southeast Asia, which adopted the Singhalese Buddhism in the thirteenth century—Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos—are monsoon lands where the month of May coincides with the beginnings of the rains, thus signaling great rejoicing exemplified by offerings to the monks, recitals of prayers, and nocturnal circumambulations of the temples by the faithful torchbearers.

This year the festival will be celebrated with unusual solemnity in Ceylon and Burma, and even in India, for the full moon of 1956 coincides with the twenty-five-hundredth anniversary of Parinirvana, fixed by tradition as the 544th year before the Christian Era and marking the beginning of the Buddhist Era. The Siamese, the Cambodians, and the Laotians, who calculate not by the current but by the elapsed year, have now entered upon their 2,499th year and do not celebrate the anniversary until next year. But for European Orientalists this is a matter of relative

Translated by F. Richter.

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indifference, inasmuch as the traditional date, 554 B.C., is clearly inaccurate, and is perhaps the result of confusion between Parinirvana and the Nativity of Sakyamuni. The calculations of specialists antedate Parinirvana by about sixty-five years and place it at about 477 B.C. We are dealing, however, with very old traditions, and can readily grant that all Buddhists, depending on their method of figuring dates, are currently celebrating the twenty-five-hundredth anniversary of Parinirvana within the margin of perhaps a year.

I have made inquiries regarding the exceptional importance and solemnity which are attached this year to the celebration. The answers I received tended to be vague, asserting that this period marks a date after which the Buddhist religion would enter upon an era of great prosperity, bringing about the adoption by the entire world of a mode of life conforming to the Buddhist ideal and universal peace. A religious Singhalese, however, has written to me in more precise terms:

"According to an old tradition," he says, "there is a firm belief in Buddhist countries that there will be a great renaissance of the religion and a great expansion of the Law in the world twenty-five-hundred years after the Parinirvana Buddha. The decline of the Law will take place much later, after a long period of renaissance. The twenty-five-hundredth year of the Buddhist Era marks the beginning of this renewal."

What my correspondent does not mention is that it also marks the middle of the period of 5,000 years, at the end of which, according to tradition, the doctrine will fall into oblivion. There is in fact an old prophecy with which all Buddhists are familiar, even though they may choose not to speak of it, according to which Sakyamuni announced that the doctrine which he preached would disappear at the end of a period which is generally fixed at 5,000 years.

But, it may be said, how could the Buddha fix an end to the observance of his doctrine? On what does this tradition rest? In what measure has the doctrine exercised an influence on the history of Buddhism? How can one reconcile belief in a limited duration of the religion with the perspective, in a far-distant future, of the appearance of a Buddha who will be called Maitreya? Does not this Messianic hope imply belief in the permanence of the religion over countless millenniums?

In reality, in the realm of Buddhist philosophy it is a heresy to speak of permanence; the great law preached by Sakyamuni is the law of impermanence. Man is subject to transmigration in a cycle of innumerable rebirths. The cosmos is subject to destruction and periodic re-creation.

The only eternal truth is that of Nirvana, which is stability without place or shape. The religion itself, like everything else, is subject to decline and disappearance, only to be reborn in another period of the universe, through the preaching of a new Buddha.

Accordingly, the tradition of an ending which Sakyamuni himself implied in his doctrine is in full harmony with this conception, and one can give some credence to the passage in the Scriptures which attributes this statement to him. The passage is part of the most ancient expression of the tradition. It was accepted by all the Schools, and therefore antedates the first schism, which took place in the middle of the fourth century B.C. and is to be found in the first of the three Canons relating to the rules of monastic discipline. At the beginning of his career, the Buddha did not accept women in his community. But as the result of the repeated remonstrances of his cousin and faithful disciple, Ananda, he decided, against his own instincts, to admit them, though he imposed on them absolute submission to their male colleagues. But he could not refrain from remarking, with a sigh: "If, Ananda, women had not been authorized to leave their homes in order to adopt a life without protection under the aegis of the Doctrine and the discipline of the One who knows the truth, then, Ananda, the pure religion would have endured for a long time; the good Law would have lasted a thousand years. But inasmuch as women have now received this permission, the result will be, Ananda, that the pure religion will not last so long; the good Law will not last more than 500 years."¹

This saying is well in keeping with the misogyny of Sakyamuni and I am inclined to believe that the text I have quoted relates to a definite event. Besides, when after his end on earth, the principal disciplines met in council to establish the forms of his teaching, the traditions of most of the sects are at one in depicting Ananda as being accused by his colleagues of various mistakes, among which is regularly quoted that of having persuaded his master to admit women into the community.²

In the second of the three Canons, that of the Discourses of the Buddha, the idea of the impermanence of the good Law is formulated in various places. This impermanence is attributed in part to the various imperfections of the faithful, such as negligence, laziness, arrogance, discontent, inattention, lack of intelligence, bad company, evil practices and lack of

1. *Vinaya*, H. Oldenberg, ed., II, p. 256; Eng. trans., Warren, *Buddhism in Translations*, pp. 441 ff.

2. A. Bareau, *Les premiers Conciles bouddhiques*, Paris, 1955, pp. 7-15.

good practices, in part to misrepresentation of the doctrine in futile actions, and lack of consideration for the Master, for his Law, for his community, and to neglect of study and meditation.³

At the time of the compilation of his discourses, about the first century B.C., there was still no question of a definite period when the good Law would disappear, nor of the stages of its progressive decline. These notions appear for the first time in the famous conversations of the Indo-Greek King Menander (ca. 160-150 B.C.) with the Buddhist sage Nagasena, which are usually attributed to the first century A.D. King Menander points out the contradiction between two statements of the Buddah, who, on the one hand, says that the good Law will last only 500 years, and, on the other hand, that if the monks lead a life without reproach, the world will never lack saints to reach the stage of emancipation, this second affirmation appearing to imply an indefinite duration of the Law. To this the sage Nagasena replied, with some subtlety, that the two affirmations referred to two different things, the first speaking of the duration of the Law, and the second relating to religious practice, and that the King confused the limitation of the thing with its definition. Thereupon, the King replied, "Venerable Nagasena, when you speak of the disappearance of the good Law, what do you mean by 'disappearance'?" Nagasena answered: "Oh King, there are three modes of disappearance of the Doctrine. You ask what are these three modes. They are, the disappearance of the acquisition of the degrees of sanctity, disappearance of the observance of the precepts and disappearance of the outward signs of the Doctrine."⁴

Some centuries after these conversations of King Menander, certain commentaries of canonic texts, composed by Buddhaghosa in the first half of the fifth century, mention three further stages in the disappearance of the good Law, substituting for that of the outward sign that of knowledge of the sacred writings,⁵ and it was this third item which was accepted in China, where they divide the time of the existence of the Law into three epochs: that of the true Law, that of the counterfeit Law, and that of the last Law. The durations of these epochs vary according to the schools of thought.

Another commentary of Buddhaghosa, however, describes the decline and disappearance of the doctrine in five stages: disappearance of the

3. *Anguttaranikaya*, I, pp. 17-18; *Samyuttanikaya*, II, p. 224.

4. *Milindapanha*, V. Trenckner, ed., pp. 130-134.

5. *Sammohavinodani*, pp. 431-433; *Saratthapakasini*, Bangkok ed., II, p. 254.

acquisition of the degrees of sanctity, disappearance of the observance of the precepts, disappearance of the knowledge of the Scriptures, disappearance of the outward signs, and, lastly, disappearance of the relics of the Buddha.⁶ One thousand years after Nirvana, the faithful will become incapable of acquiring the various degrees of sanctity. The death of the last of the faithful who had entered upon the course leading to deliverance will mark this first disappearance. The second, that of the observance of the precepts, will begin when the minor prohibitions are ignored. The third stage, brought about by the impiety of the kings and their subjects, will cause droughts and famine, and thereby the death of the monks and disciples. It will be marked by the disappearance of the last text of the third Canon and end with the disappearance of the first text of the first Canon, just as if the progressive disappearance of the Bible began with the New Testament and ended with the Book of Genesis.

The fourth disappearance, that of the outward signs of the religion, is the occasion of a very interesting development. In the course of time, there will be great negligence in the wearing of the monastic robe and the manner in which the begging bowl is carried. In imitation of the heretics, the monks will substitute gourds for begging bowls and end up for convenience' sake by carrying them at the end of poles. As for their robes, they will no longer dye them, and in the end will keep only a small piece which they will bind around the wrist, the throat, or the hair. They will have wives and children and work for them. Finally they will remark: "What is the use of the piece of saffron cloth?" They will take it off and toss it among the nettles.

Lastly, the disappearance of the relics of the Buddha,⁷ which marks the end of the religion, is to undergo a long development, the details of which I will quote in full, as they have inspired numerous writings.

"At first, the relics of the Buddha, when they have been deprived of honor and adoration, will repair to such place where they may still receive honor and adoration. In due course, they will not receive honor or adoration in any place. At the time fixed for the end of the religion, the relics will reassemble, first in the Island of Ceylon, at the Mahacetiya which refers to the great stupa of Anuradhapura, the ruins of which are known

6. *Manorathapurani*, I, pp. 87-91.

7. This disappearance is given in another commentary of the same epoch as achieving the Parinirvana of Sakyamuni—his complete annihilation—under the Tree of Knowledge, beginning with the destruction of his passions and continuing to his death, through the destruction of the various constituents of his body, but which will not be complete until the last corporeal relics are destroyed by fire.

under the name of 'Ruanweli Dagoba,' then at the Nagadipacetiya, (another monument in the northwest of the Island) and from there to Bodhipallanka which is Bodh Gaya in India. The relics will leave the world of the Nagas, of the gods of Brahma and find a final resting-place in Bodhipallanka. None of the relics, even though they be the size of a grain of mustard seed, will be lost on the way. All the relics, having re-assembled on the throne where the Illumination took place, will take the shape of the Buddha and will reconstitute his body seated on the throne. The thirty-two characteristic signs of the great man and the eighty accessory signs will be visible as a unity and will produce an aureole of fire around the Buddha. Then they will reproduce the double miracle of emitting at the same time rays of light and springs of water. At that place there will be not a single creature in human form. But all the gods of the Ten Thousand Worlds will utter lamentations and say, 'Today He who possessed the ten intellectual powers has been extinguished; from now on there will be darkness.'

"There will follow a great fire issuing from the body made of relics. It will destroy them, and the flame rising from the body made of the relics will rise up to the sky of Brahma. The flame will consume all, even the smallest relics, though it be only the size of a grain of mustard seed. In this way, the relics will illustrate their great power and then disappear. And the assembly of the gods, as on the day of Parinirvana, will render homage with scents, garlands of flowers, and music and will take three turns round the place, turning their right side to it. And having rendered this homage, they will say, 'May we live to see the Buddha who is to come.' And everyone will return whence he came. In this way the disappearance of the relics will take place."

This apocalyptic vision of the end of the Buddhist Era has a certain grandeur and has inspired all the works that deal with the future of the religion. At the same time, the final wish expressed by the gods opens horizons of hope to which I will refer later. Moreover, the disappearance of the doctrine is postponed in this text to a far later date than that of five hundred years traditionally fixed by Sakyamuni, mentioned in the conversations of King Menander, and already passed when Buddhaghosa wrote his commentaries about nine hundred years after the Parinirvana. According to this author, it is not until the end of a thousand years, that is to say, a little after the time when he lived, that the first disappearance would take place. I refer to that of the acquisition of degrees of sanctity, of which no further examples could very likely have taken place during

his time. And if one is to assume that the five disappearances are equally spaced out in time, one arrives at a duration of 5,000 years. That is also the conclusion of a work of uncertain date, the *Anagatavamsa*,⁸ or *History of the Times to Come*, which, inspired by the commentaries of Buddhaghosa and drawn from the same source, says textually that the end of the religion will take place 5,000 years after Parinirvana. And Buddhaghosa himself, in one of his commentaries of the *Abhidhamma*, says clearly that the result of the final council held shortly after the demise of the Buddha was to secure to the Doctrine the duration of 5,000 years.⁹

These five disappearances spaced a thousand years apart henceforth figure in all the writings dealing with the future of the religion. They are to be found, though in a slightly different sequence, in a treatise written in Ceylon in the reign of Bhuvanekabahu (1277 to 1288) by Siddhatthathera, the *Saratthasangha*,¹⁰ as well as in another work dating from the first half of the fifteenth century, the *Saddhammaratnakara*, of which Spencer Hardy makes considerable use in his classic works on Buddhism.¹¹

In the Indochinese Peninsula, one finds them in an inscription of one of the first Kings of Siam in 1357¹² and in a work on the history of the religion written by Chieng Mai at the beginning of the sixteenth century.¹³ As for the term of 5,000 years, that is a notion so widespread that there exists hardly a dedication of a statute or final sentence of a manuscript which does not refer to it and express the hope that the work of the faithful, in dedicating a statute or writing a treatise, will contribute to the prosperity of the religion and its duration for 5,000 years.

It appears therefore that the ideas about the progressive decline of the Buddhist doctrine of five stages, spaced a thousand years apart, go back to an epoch between the conversations of King Menander, composed at the beginning of the Christian Era and which fix the duration of the good Law at five hundred years¹⁴ with three stages for its decadence, and the composition of the commentaries by Buddhaghosa during the fifth cen-

8. *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, ed. Minayeff, 1886, pp. 84-86.

9. Maung Tin and Rhys Davids, *The Expositor*, I, 35.

10. Edition singhalaise, XXII, 30.

11. *Eastern Monarchism*, London, 1850, pp. 427-430; *A Manual of Buddhism*, London, 1860.

12. See below, note 18.

13. *Mula sasana*, Bangkok edition, 1939, p. 263 ff.

14. This perhaps constitutes an argument tending to prove that the work had been composed prior to that period, i.e., before the beginning of the Christian Era rather than after.

ture, giving the good Law a duration of 5,000 years and envisaging five stages in its decline.

These views were clearly influenced by the decline of Buddhism in India. Eugene Burnouf has made this point with his customary perspicacity.¹⁵ He wrote, "It is easy to see that this division in the duration of the law of Sakya into periods which differ from each other in their degree has a genuine foundation in the history of Buddhism in India. It represents, in a general form, the tradition of the establishment of Buddhism, its duration, and the persecutions which led to its being driven out of India." Burnouf interprets the tradition "in this sense that the Buddhists, after having been driven from India, retained remembrance of the epoch when their belief flourished, and that for them this epoch was naturally divided into periods, more or less numerous, which, commencing with the death of the founder of the doctrine, extended until the time of its decline and came to an end when they were expelled from their native country."

In fact, it was about the time of the fifth century A.D., between the nine-hundredth and one-thousandth year of the Buddhist Era, that the doctrine of Sakyamuni began to show in India clear signs of decline. Thus one may ask if the threats, which at the approach of the one-thousandth year began to weigh down on Buddhism, did not exercise a decisive role in the revival of sacred writings during the fourth and fifth centuries. These dangers may have stimulated on the one hand the great commentators Asanza and Vasubandhu in the north, Buddhadatta, Buddhaghosa, and Dhammapala in the south, and, also on the other hand the establishment during the first half of the fifth century of the celebrated monastery of Nalanda, which was destined to exercise such a great influence on Buddhism outside India. It is certain that in China during the sixth century it was believed that the third and last stage of the decline, that of the last Law, had come. As a result, a sect known as the Sect of the Third Degree was formed and played a great part in China and the countries of Chinese culture between the sixth and eighth centuries.¹⁶

Already in the second half of the first century B.C., the approach of the expiration at the end of five hundred years, traditionally fixed by the Buddha himself, had, according to the Singhalese Chronicles, brought about a Council in Ceylon under King Vattagamani. Here for

15. *Lotus de la Bonne Loi*, I, pp. 366-367.

16. A. Waley, review of Yabuki Keiki's work on that sect in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, V, 1928, pp. 162-69.

the first time were written down the texts of the Canons "so that the religion may remain a long time" (as the oldest chroniclers, Mahavamsa and Dipavamsa, expressly say)¹⁷ and "so that the religion may last five thousand years" (as is stated in later works,¹⁸ which, while basing themselves on these periods of time, add that the end of the religion foreseen in the commentaries of Buddhaghosa would take place after five thousand years).

However that may be, after the disappearance of Buddhism in India, the thoughts of the Buddhists of Ceylon and other countries turned to the five successive phases of the decline of the doctrine which were to take place at the end of each period of one thousand years. This is the thesis laid down with precision and with supporting dates by King Lüt'ai who reigned at Sukhodaya, the first capital of independent Siam, during the middle of the fourteenth century and whose name appears in an inscription commemorating the installing of a relic, and the planting of a shoot of the sacred fig tree from Ceylon.¹⁹ This foundation, it should be noted, dated from 1357 A.D., that is to say in the nineteen-hundredth year of the Buddhist Era and one hundred years before the beginning of the second phase in the decline of the religion. The king, who was a fervent Buddhist and a well-read person, very knowledgeable in the Scriptures and author of a treaty on cosmology,²⁰ was regarded as an authority in Cambodia and Siam before the introduction of western science. He does not speak of an ending in the year 1000, i.e. 457 A.D., which had passed long ago and which marked the end of the acquisition of the degrees of saintliness. On the other hand, he foresees the coming disappearance of knowledge of the Scriptures.²¹

As the disappearance of the Holy Scriptures was to occur only one

17. *Mahavamsa*, XXXIII, 100-101; *Dipavamsa*, XX, 20-21.

18. *Saddhammasangaha*, *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1890, p. 49; *Sangitivamsa*, Bangkok, 1789; Siamese ed., 1923, p. 96.

19. G. Coëdès, *Recueil des Inscriptions du Siam*, I, pp. 83-87.

20. *Traibhumikatha*, Bangkok, 1913.

21. If someone asks, he says, "how much time will elapse before the doctrine of our Master will disappear, this is what one must reply: it will be 3099 years after the year when this great relic was installed."

As its foundation dates from 1357 A.D. it would be in 4456 A.D., that is, in the 5,000th year of the Buddhist Era, that this disappearance of Buddhism should take place, in accordance with the tradition established in the fifth century, by the *Commentaries of Buddhaghosa*.

"On the other hand," the inscription continues, "in ninety-nine years after the foundation of this great relic, in the year of the hog (1456 A.D. or 2000 in the Buddhist Era), the three collections of the Scriptures will disappear." The details of that disappearance follow:

"After another one thousand years (2456 A.D. or the 3,000th year of the Buddhist Era)

hundred years after King Lüt'ai, he was no further interested in this subject. What seemed to him to be of far greater concern was the observance of moral precepts, the disappearance of which was not to take place until one thousand years later: *Sic grande mortali aevi spatium!* Not, apparently, that he considered it possible to delay this extinction, which was ineluctable, or to postpone the decline of the religion. But in a short admonitory phrase following his prediction, he exhorts his subjects to profit by their good fortune of having been born at a period when the doctrine still existed.

"From today onwards," he preached to his subjects, "it is essential that all people of good character should hasten to accomplish works regarded as meritorious in the Buddhist religion during the period in which the religion still exists. Our generation, at the present time, enjoys great benefits because it came into the world while the Buddhist religion is still in existence. Everyone should hasten to pay homage at the stupas, at the cetiyas and at the Tree of Enlightenment, for such veneration is equivalent to paying homage to the Master in person. Whoever formulates a wish believing in this equivalence, even if he only once formulates the wish to be reborn in heaven, to wait until Sri Arya Maitreya descends to become Buddha, and then to be reborn on earth, he will certainly have his wish granted."

This little homily reveals the perspectives offered to adepts, in spite of the threat of the disappearance of the doctrine at the end of five thousand years of existence, and how this pessimistic view of the future could be reconciled with the hope that they would be able to obtain salvation dur-

there will still be some monks who will observe the four great precepts, but they will not increase in number.

"After another one thousand years (3456 A.D. or the 4,000th year of the Buddhist Era) there will no longer be any monks wearing the monastic robe, but there will still be a tiny piece of yellow cloth, just enough to fill the cavity of the ear, and it is by that sign that one will be able to recognize unmistakably the adepts in the doctrine of the Master.

"One thousand years later (4456 A.D. or the 5,000th year of the Buddhist Era) no one will any longer be able to recognize the monastic robe or to know what a monk is. The relics of the Master, whether it be the one installed here, or those installed elsewhere, will still be in existence. In the last year, when the doctrine of the Buddha, our Master, definitely disappears, in the Year of the Rat, during the full moon of the sixth month, on a Saturday, in the lunar house of Vaisakha, all the saintly relics, including not only the relics on the earth, but also the relics in the world of the gods, or in the world of the Nagas, will rise in the middle of the firmament, reassemble in the Island of Ceylon, and enter the great stupa Ratanamalika. Then they will be wafted up and enter the sacred Tree of Enlightenment underneath which the Master attained the omniscience of a Buddha. Thereupon, fire will devour all the saintly relics and the flame will rise up to the world of Brahma. On that day the doctrine of the Buddha will disappear. From that time no man will know of works which generate merit. Man will commit bad actions and will assuredly be reborn in hell."

ing the course of their future rebirths. If the doctrine, like everything else, is subject to the law of impermanence, and thereby threatened with decline and annihilation, there is also a promise that it will be renewed and revived in the course of time. In the Buddhist cosmology and in Indian cosmology in general, time is divided into long cycles. The great years, called "yuga" and "kalpa" "are eternally renewed in great cycles which include groups of smaller cycles."²² The largest cycle is divided into four incalculable periods, which are subdivided into twenty intermediary periods, each of which embraces eight ages of the world: Kali where human life spends normally a minimum of ten years; Dvapara, Treta, Krita where human life acquires incalculable duration; then again, but in reverse order, Krita, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali (the age in which we live at present). In these stages life, diminishes progressively, to return to ten-year periods.

The incalculable periods constituting the great period consist of successive involution and evolution. They are separated by intermediary periods of stability in the states of involution or evolution. During the period of involution, beings cease to be born and, being emptied of living creatures, the world destroys itself in stages by fire, water, and wind.²³ During the period of evolution, there is re-creation, or rather a return of the world and beings to a differentiated and organized state.

The Buddha Sakyamuni who died 2,500 years ago, was not, according to this outlook, the first sage to be conscious of the principles constituting the essence of the doctrine. According to the teachings of the schools, he was preceded by six or by twenty-four Buddhas whose careers had been

22. L. Renou and J. Filliozat, *L'Inde classique*, II, p. 528.

23. These notions of the limited duration of Creation are very widespread. Not to mention the Judeo-Christian apocalypse there is the Etruscan cosmology as it is briefly stated in a passage of Suidas: "The Demiurge has determined for the world a time span of twelve millennia; each of these 1,000 years being placed under the domination of one of the signs of the Zodiac. The Creation itself would take six millennia. During the first millennium the Demiurge will make the Sky and the Earth and, during the second, the Firmament; in the third, the sea and the rivers, then the two great stars, then the souls of animals, and last, man, who would have only six millennia remaining to him" (A. Grenier, "Les Religions étrusque et romaine," in *Mana*, II, p. 25). We know that in the old Germanic faiths explained in the Scandinavian *Edda*, men, gods, giants, and demons are destined to perish in a great catastrophe. "The stars and the sun disappear; the earth falls into the sea, and great tongues of flame leap toward the sky. It is the end of a world, but not of all possible worlds. The universe over which Odin ruled foundered, finally, in moral abasement and in indignity. That is perhaps why it had to disappear. But now a new era begins. The beings who peopled the universe have not all disappeared. The earth is renewed, full of the freshness and vigor of youth, from the bosom of the sea. . . . An epoch of innocence and moral purity succeeds one of trickery, violence, and iniquity" (E. Tonnelat, *La Religion des Germains*, in *Mana*, II, pp. 380-81). One might cite many other examples, but none attains the intoxicating grandeur of the Indian vision of a universe eternally submitted to destruction and re-creation.

similar to his own, differing only "according to their lineage, the tree under which they attained Enlightenment, the number of their listeners and the conditions of life during the ages in which they appeared."²⁴ Each one has pursued, during the course of successive births, a long career as a Bodhisattva, before becoming a Buddha. They have been destined to become Buddhas owing to a resolution, which they took at the beginning of their career, based on an enormous accumulation of suitable natural tendencies. Each was the recipient of a prediction from one of his predecessors, indicating the necessity to be born during one of his existences at a period when the earth would benefit by the presence and teaching of a Buddha.

Our historic Buddha Sakyamuni was neither the first nor the last Buddha. Humanity is assured of the coming of Maitreya, the Consoler, who at present lives, awaiting his hour, in the same heaven in which resided the one who 2,580 years ago was reborn as Sakyamuni. Maitreya will be reborn when the world, in a period of evolution, will recognize that human life is to last for eighty thousand years. His career will be similar to that of the Buddha Sakyamuni, but the doctrine that Maitreya will preach will last much longer than that of Sakyamuni—one hundred and eighty thousand years instead of five thousand years.

Now the question arises: since the Law of Impermanence is inescapable, since the Doctrine is inexorably submissive to it, what is the advantage of efforts made by man to prevent or retard the fatal collapse after the five-thousand-year period?

Referring to the sermon of King Lüt'ai, and having regard to the correct and clear manner in which he expounds the orthodox Buddhist point of view of his time, one realizes that there was no question for him of contradicting the Law of Impermanence. His exhortations were intended to persuade his subjects to profit as much as possible by their good fortune in coming to this earth at a time when the Buddhist Doctrine was still known and practiced here. He considered that knowledge of the Sacred Writings would disappear soon after him: ninety-nine years after his establishment of a reliquary and the planting of a sacred fig tree. But the observance of the precepts and moral virtues still had a thousand years of life before the process of the deterioration of the external signs began to take place. Thus, during a period of a little more than a thousand years, humanity still had the opportunity and possibility of practicing those

24. L. Renou and J. Filliozat, *op. cit.*, p. 538.

virtues, the observance of which entitled the faithful to be reborn during the epoch of Maitreya the Consoler, which was a necessary preliminary to entering upon the Path of Nirvana.

The renaissance of the Doctrine which will attain its culmination in the awakening of Maitreya to omniscience, will be prepared and favored by the discovery which humanity will make during the period of the evolution of the traces left by the epoch of his predecessor Sakyamuni. It must be understood that here reference is not made to bodily relics, as these would be completely destroyed by fire in the five-thousandth year of the Buddhist Era, but to images, and notably to votive tablets representing a famous statue, as well as to the Great Miracle by which Sakyamuni confounded the heretics who contradicted him and converted a vast assembly to his Doctrine.

In the course of my study of these tablets, of which thousands have been discovered hidden in the interior of stupas or piled up in grottoes, I asked myself if those responsible for these depots "had not a long-term propaganda in view, as the end was due to come only after many thousand years." And since the majority²⁵ of these tablets have a formula inscribed upon them, often referred to as "The Buddhist Credo," the recital of which had brought about the conversion of the two great disciples, Sariputra and Mahamaudgalyayana, I added "when the allotted time has passed, the religion will fall into oblivion; the sacred stamps carrying the image of the Master, and with a short formula summing up his Doctrine, would without doubt in the minds of pious persons serve to edify those who discover these tablets in the caves or the ruins of the stupas, thereby contributing to the resurrection of the Doctrine."

So far I have said nothing about the 2,500th anniversary which is now being celebrated by the Buddhist world. The reason is that I have been unable to find any ancient text attributing importance to this date. Up to the end of the eighteenth century, at any rate, only the successive decline of the religion from millennium to millennium and its definite disappearance at the end of five thousand years were mentioned. The *Pathamasambodhi*, which is the classic life of the Buddha in Siam and Cambodia, and the date of which is uncertain, as well as the *Sangitivamsa*, which is a history of the conferences, written in Bangkok at the end of the eighteenth century,²⁶ repeat what has been observed before. In 1833, Sangermano, in his book

25. "Tablettes votives bouddhiques du Siam," *Etudes asiatiques de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient*, 1925, I, pp. 150-51.

26. *Supra*, note 17.

on Burma,²⁷ quoted the view of a celebrated "talapoin," the tutor of King Hsin-byu-shin, who mentioned the prophecy of the Buddha, fixing the duration of his Doctrine on earth at five thousand years.

It seems that it was only at the end of the last century or the commencement of the present one that people began to pay some attention to the decadence after 2,500 years, and to speculate upon this subject. Indeed, it is a remarkable date, since it marks exactly the middle of the period of five thousand years, traditionally assigned by the Buddha as the duration of his teaching.

But, on the one hand, it was easy to prove that if the disappearance of the degrees of saintliness was an established fact for a long time, the disappearance of the canonic Scriptures did not take place in the year 1456 of our era, as King Lüt'ai had predicted and that the observance of the precepts was in no way in danger. On the other hand, the penetration of western thought in the world did not tend, in the minds of educated people, to make it admissible that the relics should be reassembled by air transport for their final conflagration. This objection applied both in religious and lay circles. Lastly, so far from being present at the decline of their religion, Buddhists could, on the contrary, note its penetration among various backward minorities as well as the upsurge of Buddhist studies and the diffusion of their Scriptures in Europe and America. At the same time, while importance was attached to the 2,500th anniversary of Parinirvana, as marking the middle of the duration of the religion according to very old traditions, yet there arose a certain skepticism regarding the value of these traditions. This attitude of mind is reflected in a typical manner by the decision taken at the beginning of the present century by the King of Siam. Formerly, it was the custom of the Siamese priests to begin their sermons with a reference to the exact number of years, months, and days that had passed since Parinirvana and to the number of years, months, and days still to run before the predicted ending of the five thousand years.

King Chulalongkorn, considering that this continual reference to the danger that menaced religion was irksome, and after having consulted the Supreme Head of the clergy, who was himself critical of this announcement of the disappearance of the Doctrine, simply suppressed any reference to the years to come, retaining only a mention of the time that had passed since Parinirvana.²⁸

27. *Description of the Burmese Empire*, p. 80.

28. Kenneth E. Wells, *Thai Buddhism*, Bangkok, 1939, pp. 50-51.

If educated Buddhists no longer believe in the progressive decline of their religion and its final disappearance at a predetermined date, they have nevertheless inherited, from the time when this belief was current, the idea that this anniversary marks the exact middle of the traditional five thousand years and ascribe a certain importance to it. Impermanence is an idea planted so deeply in the mind of Buddhists that its disappearance at some future date is not unacceptable to them. As I said earlier, one of my Ceylonese informers did not deny that at some future date the religion will disappear.

In view of the pace at which the world moves now, who can predict what will happen in 2,500 years' time? That is, after all, a short time compared with the incalculable periods of the Hindu cosmology, with our geological periods, and with the light years of astronomy. And yet, to take two dates from our own history, what great changes have taken place in the 2,500 years since Parinirvana, or, if I may refer to events more familiar to us, the capture of Babylon by Cyrus and the Age of Pisistratus!

Turning to the present, the 2,500th anniversary practically coincides with the achievement of political independence by countries that had formerly been colonies and whose national religion is Buddhism. These are grounds for exceptional celebration.

India, the birthplace of Buddhism, and yet a country where the religion has lost its hold on the masses, nevertheless pays tribute to the spiritual value of its doctrine which springs from her own beliefs and is so much in harmony with her ideal of non-violence, this year celebrates the Buddhajyanti on a national scale. On February 5, Prime Minister Nehru handed over to the Mahabodhi Society of India, in the presence of the heads of diplomatic missions from Nepal, Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, China, and Japan, the relics of the disciples of the Buddha which had been discovered at Sanchi in 1851 and placed in the British Museum in 1887. They are in three little caskets which are copies of the original ones in the British Museum and were given by the Museum authorities to Mrs. Pandit.

It was on May 23rd that the foundation stone was laid in New Delhi of a national commemorative building of which the subject and plan have been thrown open to international competition. According to the directive, the building must be simple, austere, noble, inspiring, impregnated with the spirit of modern India, and conforming to the dignity of the Buddha. In addition, the Government of India has planned the publication of various works such as *Two Thousand Five Hundred Years of the Buddha; Buddhist*

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Scripture; a popular edition of the *Edicts of the Emperor Asoka*, in Hindi and in English, as well as the publication of *Canonic Texts* in the Devanagari script.

In Ceylon, the preparation for celebrating this anniversary began on October 12, 1952, with a meeting of the Lanka Bauddha Mandalaya Council, whose task it is to make the necessary arrangements. These include an *International Encyclopedia of Buddhism* with contributions from Buddhists throughout the world.

In Burma, on November 1, 1951, Parliament passed a unanimous resolution presented by the Minister of Home and Religious Affairs of which the text is as follows:

"Not finding satisfaction in the measures so far taken by the peoples and governments of the world, for the solution of the problems that confront humanity, a solution consisting in furthering the material well-being of man in his present existence by the improvement of his conditions and standard of life, and moreover fully conscious of the fact that such measures would bring only a partial solution to these problems, this Parliament records its firm conviction that it is necessary to make provision for, and to bring into being, measures for the spiritual and moral well-being of mankind, in a manner to eliminate these problems and to help man to overcome desire, hatred, and folly, which are the root-causes of the violence, the destruction, and the conflagrations which are ruining the world."

In order to implement this resolution a council was convoked at Rangoon to revise the texts of the *Tripitaka* with the aid of religious and lay scholars from Ceylon, Cambodia, Thailand, and even India, Pakistan, and Nepal. This council, which began its labors during the full moon in May, 1954, was expected to have completed these labors on May 24, 1956. Their program included an edition of the Pali texts in the Burmese language, in Devanagari, and in Latin, not to mention the translations into Burmese, Hindi, and English.

And so once again, as was the case on the eve of the five-hundredth anniversary, when for the first time the doctrines were written down in Pali, and on the eve of the one-thousandth anniversary, when the great Commentaries were written, so also the celebration of the 2,500th anniversary of Parinirvana is again marked by great scholarly activities.

But on this occasion, it is no longer a question of preventing a premature disappearance of knowledge of the Scriptures. For, thanks to the art of printing and the other means of diffusion which man today has at

his command, the preservation of the Canon is assured all over the globe for a period far longer than ancient man could have thought possible, unless of course humanity is destroyed by thermonuclear suicide. If I have insisted in recalling somewhat in detail their pessimistic views about the future of their beliefs, it has been with the purpose of throwing light on the flourishing condition of Buddhism in the world after 2,500 years of its existence. It is true that Buddhism has practically disappeared from its country of origin, India, where it is scarcely represented except by the archeological remains of its ancient prosperity. On the other hand, Buddhism has made conquests or fundamentally influenced large areas of east and southeast Asia. Moreover, it has commanded attention in Europe as well as in America as one of the great universal religions whose dynamism it would be wrong to underestimate. In India itself, where it was rejected, Buddhism begins to be recognized once again for the part it played in the teaching of Sakyamuni, which occupies such a prominent place in Indian thought.

MR. BELL ON TRAGEDY

In his article on tragedy (*Diogenes*, No. 7), Mr. Charles G. Bell has offered us some provocative insights and opinions. I am compelled to question, however, some of the basic concepts he brings to the interpretation of tragedy.

It would seem that Mr. Bell, despite the depth of his thinking, has embraced several of the current clichés, which perhaps have their origin in the writings of A. C. Bradley. Critics adhering to this school hold that, for one reason or another, it is not possible to write tragedy in the twentieth century and that no work ending in bleak pessimism or despair is tragic. Mr. Bell, combining literary and historical criteria, is particularly severe in his limitation of the field of tragedy and the possibilities open to it. If I read him aright, only Aeschylus, Shakespeare, and the earlier Sophocles (before he fell from grace) have ever really earned admission to the exclusive realm.

From the viewpoint of history, tragedy is limited to a fragile cultural moment shimmering fleetingly between an untragic primitive sorrow and an equally untragic rationalization of reality. Mr. Bell's thesis is suggestive, insofar as tragedy must contain a deep intuition into suffering and yet a questioning awareness that is rational. Certain historical moments are undoubtedly more conducive to this outlook than others, but there is no evidence to show that exceptionally sensitive individuals may not possess at whatever time a truly tragic awareness—Alfieri, Lacos, and

Vigny, for examples. Mr. Bell's explanation, despite the truth it contains, does not strike at the heart of the matter. Tragedy is written (when it is not largely esthetic virtuosity and a mode of psychological analysis, as in seventeenth-century France) in periods of cultural crisis. When an accepted ordering of human destiny, be it cruel or joyous, explodes, then emotional security and the felt metaphysical basis of values, necessary to meaningful conduct, vanish at the same time. That is why the concept of a "Counter-Renaissance," treading on the high hopes of neo-Platonic optimism, is so illuminating for English and Spanish tragedy of the early seventeenth century. Montaigne, Galileo, and Machiavelli—following Luther, Calvin, and others—pricked the bubble of optimism that contained the early Renaissance ordering of man, the universe, and the State. Doubtless expressing a growing state of mind, they helped to create a complete revolution. By not grasping the full nature of this historical moment Mr. Bell is led to a dubious interpretation of Hamlet's melancholy.¹ Fifth-century Greece had been shaken by a similar revision; the untenability of the old religious outlook became apparent in the light of new philosophies, and the Peloponnesian wars later heightened the crisis. What of our own time? Has the setting for tragedy ever existed more clearly, more perfectly, than now? Never has there been a more resounding overthrow of the old order, a wider challenge to an inherited, patterned world-view. The nature of the universe, man's destiny, the worth of the individual, the role of the State, the transvaluation of values; man's principal activities—science, art, war; all is in a chaos of transition as we dance on the grave of our fathers' world. As in other such ages, ours is indeed a period of pessimism and doubt; but it is also a time of new affirmations, and of struggle to forge a new order and pattern. It is a bitter age, but heroic; not a bowed and cowed age. And it is to such a period that doctrinaire critics would deny the possibility of tragedy in the name of a rigid and arbitrary dogma.

The historical pattern Mr. Bell utilizes leads to other difficulties. At one point he tells us that tragedy of the individual is impossible now. Only the tragedy of all humanity can be written in a culture which drowns the personal element in mass-wars, mass-states, mass-education. But just four pages later, he finds that emotional depression is the inevitable effect of the

1. And in particular the sense of his soliloquy. "What a piece of work is a man. . . ." See my article, "Hamlet, Don Quijote and *La vida es sueño*: the quest for values," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 1953. It is enough to state here that Mr. Bell's quotation from Schopenhauer, which he considers a perversion or misinterpretation of tragedy, applies precisely to Hamlet's experience: "We are brought face to face with great suffering and the story and stress of existence; and the outcome of it is to show the vanity of all human effort . . . we are . . . prompted to disengage our will from the struggle for life."

narrow tragedy of the *individual* that is being written in our time. In reality, all tragedy is a tragical history of humanity; and all tragedy is expressed through an individual experience, which symbolizes man and the world. It is indeed true that only tragedies of individuals are being written, and that only the tragedy of humanity is possible. But so it has always been, for this is precisely the nature of tragedy. Richard II, Hamlet, and Othello are most certainly individuals; Christine in *Mourning Becomes Electra* is an individual, but her story has universal implications. But Mr. Bell means perhaps that the individual has no importance today. It may be argued that in many ways the individual has far more importance than ever before in Western culture. This, we are told, is the period of hollow men, of romantic disillusion following romantic faith. (It is not very clear how Mr. Bell combines romanticism as an "inebriating" optimism with romanticism as a "fevered waste" and disillusion.) Well, what of Hamlet? Is he not the perfect embodiment of precisely this phenomenon? Certainly, Shakespeare rose painfully to affirmation, after the first tragedies. We have no Shakespeare, granted. But if O'Neill, Cocteau, Anouilh, and Camus express our disillusion, do not Montherlant, Malraux, Sartre, Anouilh, too, and the later Camus, rise painfully to affirmation? Do they not give full scope to the tragedy of the individual, an individual through whom we discover the tragic truth of the human condition?

Strangely, we find the twentieth century likened to the Middle Ages. In both that bleak time and our own, we are told, suffering loses its tragic quality and becomes comic. We are about to exclaim that the comic is only another perspective on human tragedy. On turning the page, however, we find that a grotesque laughter of pain is indeed admissible—since it is to be found in *Hamlet* and *Lear*—and must therefore have *droit de cité* into the walled enclosure of tragedy.

The historical framework is only the background and foundation for Mr. Bell's main charge against tragedy in our time. This phase of his assault is less original than his historical analysis, and is, as he says, an opinion commonly held by our critics. Tragedy will not admit to its halls any plays (may I doubt, parenthetically, the esthetic validity of considering tragedy as perforce limited to the theatre, at a time when great tragedies have been written in the novel form?) that do not end with the death of the hero and with his implicit spiritual triumph, the latter consideration being particularly vital. This formula is bound to lead to certain minor difficulties. *Oedipus rex* would be no longer a tragedy, nor perhaps the *Oresteia*. On the other hand, *Oedipus at Colonus*, where these

two conditions are satisfied, does not quite make the grade for Mr. Bell, on other grounds. Here there is too much "Socratic peace."

Let us examine the matter more closely. There is no tragedy, we are correctly told, without questioning and pessimism; but pessimism must be conquered, even in defeat, by optimism. Questioning must find an answer—and the answer must be of hopeful confidence in man and the divine goodness of the world. What an arbitrary limit to tragedy! And a criterion difficult to apply. *Oedipus rex*, for instance, because of separation of time, may be considered independently of its sequel. What desolation ends it! Here are no answers, only the bleak tragedy of man's aspirations that turn against him, the ironic blindness of action. But Oedipus has the greatness to stand up to his tragic destiny. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, however, he no longer accepts his existential responsibility (what Jaspers terms "tragic guilt"); instead he complains of injustice and shouts his ethical innocence. He is redeemed and deified at the end; but this is not compensation for his innocence, the righting of the "wrongs" of existence. It is a semi-mystical, semi-nationalistic *jeu* of the gods. No consonance is established between our human ethical world and the conditions of living. There are gods and an order of things, but it is an impenetrable order to us; if it represents an ultimate right, the "right" is one that contains much wrong. Sophocles' outlook is very close to Shakespeare's. There is a tragic cleavage between ourselves and the world, and we cannot feel at home in it. Aeschylus is certainly more encouraging, for he tells us that each guilty man is punished, and that the gods are working with us, helping us to rise out of the night of our origins. Euripides gives us no hope; but Aristotle calls him the most tragic of the three—which proves that Aristotle, at least, did not exclude radical pessimism as a tragic outlook. On the other hand, the twentieth century—in which tragedies cannot be written—has given us the greatness of soul of Orestes, in Sartre's *Flies*. Here is fundamental redemption, in the face of a clear-eyed view of a tragic universe, as much as in Sophocles, more than in Shakespeare.

Mr. Bell shortly changes his phrasing: tragedy requires a tension of suffering and triumph. But Sartre's Orestes and the heroes of *Man's Fate* suffer, and triumph in the tragic sense; while Hamlet ends in apathy and wild revolt, unable to achieve his end by force of reason or will, but only through Claudius' own scheming and excess of evil. Tragedy also requires, we are told, a tension of action and resignation. This again leads to difficulties. Hamlet is resigned—but he knows not to what, and there is no victory. Sartre's Orestes does not find resignation, and seems the more heroic

and tragic as he faces his fate. But, Mr. Bell also interposes, some modern tragedies do not make the grade because the redemption is overt, not tacit as in *Othello*. But is Othello really redeemed, reconciled, or resigned? In the moment of denouement, he has a lucid perception of his true status. This is indeed of the essence of tragedy—as is his greatness of soul. But it is because of this very greatness that Othello, realizing his defeat by the forces of evil, in a universe without justice, unreconciled, and in the midst of a desperate crisis of utter despair, puts his rage against himself above his life. He is reconciled to his death, but not to the world, not to life. Is there not here one underlying similarity with the ending of *Mourning Becomes Electra*, which Mr. Bell condemns as the lamentable capitulation of an exhausted, bloodless creature? Of course, there are important differences in character and situation. Othello has been defeated by having been made to do evil; Lavinia because she has done evil to no avail. But tragic protagonists do not have to be ethically admirable. There is greatness in the slow suicide to which Lavinia condemns herself. Like Othello, she cuts herself off from life. Both protagonists defy the forces of life that have defeated them, and refuse a life that can be had only with submission to its terms. Both are invincible, as are the heroes of Sartre, Camus, Montherlant, and Malraux—far more so than Hamlet, who sits waiting to be plucked.

It would be possible, but unnecessary, to select other statements in Mr. Bell's article, and show the difficulties of applying them. Tragedy does not conform to his categories. Different kinds of tragedies have been written, at different times, and during a single epoch, because the tragic vision of man's estate, multiple and complex, cannot be simplified and narrowed by imposed canons. The principal defect of this approach, from Bradley to Bell, lies in its placing the emphasis on the wrong point of the trajectory, thus falsifying the true substance of tragedy. Tragedy is a particular type of experience, culminating in a view of the realities of human existence. It is possible to humans only, and essential to their condition, because as Niebuhr has said, they are finite and free. Man is an animal that is dissatisfied. Creativity is necessary to us, to free ourselves from anguished contingency and to affirm our existence; but all creativity is doomed by limit, as we are both free and bound. The cleavage we feel between the world and ourselves may spring from this existential limit to our will, or again from our being forced beyond existential limit by a circumstance (Fate) that sometimes makes us act where contradictory obligations are pressed upon us.

These are the conditions of tragic experience. But there can be no

tragedy without a tragic protagonist—that exceptional, heroic individual who accepts the challenge. An exception, separating himself from the universal, he is whirled centrifugally to experience life at its extreme limits. The centripetal force of larger laws, which he has transgressed, hurls him back to center. Existentially guilty, he suffers the nemesis existence makes ineluctable; yet he has been his own undoer. At the end, he breaks through to a view of his true position and the inevitability of the defeat of a particular, exceptional configuration. Yet man, being man, cannot avoid this deadly flight.

When we come, then, to Mr. Bell's quotations from *Oedipus at Colonus* and *King Lear* ("My life hath more of wrong endured than of wrong done," "a man more sinned against than sinning"), we find that they are perfectly apposite to tragedy, but that their tragic meaning is not laid open. This meaning inheres in the discrepancy between ethical guilt and tragic guilt, the latter being the violation of existential law by willful intent.

Tragedy consists in this experience; and it is because Mr. Bell does not bring out the nature of tragic experience and the tragic protagonist that he misplaces his emphasis. The tragic rhythm requires assertion, suffering, peripeteia, and anagnorisis. It is sufficient that this experience be undergone, for a work to qualify as tragedy. We have no right to impose the condition—which is the point of Mr. Bell's emphasis—that the ending must come out in a certain way, and inspire us with hopeful confidence in man and the divine goodness of the world. The function of tragedy is not to furnish us with the bromide of resignation nor with the stimulant of optimism. Certainly, resignation and reconciliation are one perspective tragedy may open to us. But this is incidental and contingent. It is the defeat, which is implicit in the resignation and makes it necessary—the defeat, coming after a peculiar kind of experience which conveys the feeling of human greatness—that is essential. If the particular perception obtained by the protagonist, as the result of his extreme experience, is one of bitter pessimism, or of the hopelessness of human life in a confused and meaningless universe, this may be a great truth, and even a solid foundation for true human greatness. Certainly, his experience is none the less tragic.

Tragic perception may be of different kinds, and it is most ironic to exclude pessimism from the range of its possibilities. The heart of the tragic vision, the split between the human world of aspiration and the conditions of existence in a non-human world, between will in its freedom and

necessity in its binding fate—can be laid open in this perspective as well as in another. Similarly, it is possible to write Christian tragedy, even though Christianity encloses an untragic world-view, perception of which brings tragedy to an end. If the tragic experience has been truly lived and portrayed, no more is needed for the work of art. Through it, the veil of appearance is torn and a fundamental reality is glimpsed. One experience may lead, through tragic assertion, peripeteia, and defeat of the will, to the view of an ultimate reality that redeems (but does not remove) the tragic reality of this life. Another may reveal, as in Sophocles, a mysterious order, unfathomable to us, that does not redeem the tragedy of our lives, but makes greatness possible through action and suffering, and in the end seems to achieve some purpose. A third experience may reveal, as in Euripides, a bleak universe without purpose and value, an existence in which man is an eternal stranger, a homeless exception to the universal. By making all depend on a redeeming species of perception, Mr. Bell describes one kind of tragedy and one issue of tragedy and shrinks its manifold vision to the narrowed perspective of his telescope.

Consequently, while I agree with Mr. Bell that Ibsen did not succeed in writing tragedies, it is not because his lives unfold in a universe without intrinsic value. On the contrary, discovery of the split between man's value, creativity, and a valueless universe is a discovery of widest tragic dimensions—one that may lead either to despairing apathy or to resolute and defiant greatness. Ibsen simply did not create tragic heroes or give his heroes the tragic experience of life.² Writers like Sartre, Malraux, and O'Neill, working also in a universe without intrinsic value, have written great tragic works. But Arthur Miller, who perhaps believes in a universe with order and value, has nonetheless failed to write tragedy, for he has not created the protagonist or the experience of which tragedy is made. Mr. Bell properly compares Marlowe's and Goethe's *Faust*. Marlowe has indeed written a "tragical history," for his *Faust*'s hubristic assertion is followed by suffering, anagnorisis, and catastrophe. Goethe's *Faust* falls from tragic heights, as he shifts, explores, compromises, and accomplishes. Goethe's *Faust* cannot be damned, and his death is triumph and reward for learning to be at one with cosmic purposes.

2. The disillusion and bitterness for which Mr. Bell condemns Ibsen is true also of Hamlet and Othello. *Ghosts* is not tragic, because it meets none of the conditions of the tragic experience, and not because it makes us feel that "life should be beautiful." For again, this is precisely Hamlet's feeling, and the root of his troubles. But Mr. Bell does not perceive, in the quotation with which he closes his article, Hamlet's defeat and apathy, his resignation to the futility of human effort.

Mr. Bell excludes O'Neill from tragedy on still another ground. His heroines are criminal, selfish, tortured, exhausted, and leave us with no faith in man. Man is not ennobled, but depressed. Here we are facing not the question of radical pessimism, which I hold to be a legitimate perspective of tragedy, but that of the nature of the protagonist and the emotions he inspires in us. Here the pitfall we must avoid is the confusion—to be found to some degree even in Aristotle—between the ethical standing of the protagonist and his existential standing. The tragic hero must excite our admiration, but not necessarily in the ethical sense, which would make us want to be like him. Else Richard II and Macbeth would be villains, not heroes. The admiration required is the one which Corneille so clearly understood. We must marvel at what man is capable of, in good or in evil, as he pursues to the limit the possibilities of human existence. We admire his creative efforts (which may imply destruction) and his heroism, despite necessary failure. The "optimism" lies in faith in man's persistence, defiance, and will; but the underlying tone is the pessimism of the inevitable failure of his excessive purpose, the *décalage* between his aspirations and the world. Viewed in this light, the heroines of *Mourning Becomes Electra*, Christine and Lavinia, pass the test of tragedy.³

Finally, Mr. Bell limits the scope of tragedy in still another way. Euripides he condemns for reflecting purely human feelings and disillusions. But the tragic experience can exert itself at many levels and in many directions. Tragedy may indeed engage the protagonist in Mr. Bell's favored direction—in conflict with cosmic laws. Yet it may unroll with equal justification in the individual's relation with the State, with any group or whole, or level of law. Tragedy may be particularly effective where only individuals are concerned, as in the portrayal of the excessive aspirations and the defeat of love, when man and woman attempt perfect union. The attempt at self-realization through another turns out, by the

3. In closing the doors of life behind her, Lavinia reaches the highest tragic stature. Proudly, she assumes full responsibility—*existentially*. She defiantly rejects ethical guilt or atonement, which a Raskolnikov, for instance, or Calderón's Segismundo accepts, losing their position as exceptional beings. In a valueless universe, in a night without stars, she asks no one to forgive her but herself. But she is perfectly aware of having trespassed beyond the limits life allows, aware of the necessity of her defeat, the impossibility of escape from "the infernal machine." After the greatness of carrying will to the confines of human possibilities, she has the greatness to reject death as the easier way, and seeks an even more tragic punishment. In tragedy, man achieves a victory, for he has dared to defy the unbeatable forces that oppose him; he emerges from the conflict the loser, but the greater in his existential stature. *Mourning Becomes Electra* leaves us with an unforgettable impression of Lavinia's indestructible integrity, of her invincibility even in defeat. She satisfies Bradley's requirement, that the tragic hero must have great qualities of mind and heart that have been used with wrong, so that we carry away a feeling of tragic waste.

usual tragic process of peripeteia, to be a frustration; and yet, the law of life says we must make that attempt. It is, however, true that most tragedies will perforce reflect several levels at once, as human action is not isolated. This is the case in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the *Scarlet Letter*, or *Anna Karenina*. The greatest tragedies, like *Hamlet* and *Oedipus*, embrace the cosmos, the State, and the individual in their grand sweep. But, to return to Euripides—tragedy can only be “purely human,” since tragedy is a possible experience only to men. It may well, as we have said, involve the universal order, and indeed, is not this order inextricable from the “human tragedies” of *Hippolytus* and the *Bacchas*?

Only after much hesitation have I ventured to take issue with so brilliant and redoubtable an esthetician as Mr. Bell. But the notions that underlie his article have gone too long unchallenged, and it is time that other views were advanced.

REVIEW ARTICLES

Hubert Deschamps

AFRICAN SOCIETIES

IN TRANSITION

The doctoral theses of Georges Balandier, professor at the Ecole des Hautes-Etudes—*Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique noire* ("Current Sociology of Negro Africa") and *Sociologie des Brazzavilles noires* ("Sociology of the Negro Brazzavilles")—are the culmination of studies undertaken in French Equatorial Africa while he was working in the Office de la Recherche scientifique Outre-Mer (French Bureau of Scientific Research Overseas). They are equally far removed from metaphysical sociology and from a static ethnography which seeks pure states and original traditions. They treat a moving present, ethnic groups already formed, African societies concerned about European intervention and about their own developing future. "Sociology," Louis Wirth used to say, "is the science and the art of human relations." Humanity is indeed the object of sociology, but sociology should be as well a tool for humanity. Balandier's work is a precious tool for understanding present-day Africa beyond what appears on the surface, and perhaps even for helping to construct the new Africa.

Dominating his great study is the notion of the "colonial situation," used before by Mannoni in his *Psychologie de la Colonisation* (Psychology

Translated by James H. Labadie.

of Colonization). This situation creates a state of potential crisis, a "socio-pathology," which implies tensions and reveals for each of the colonized societies its potentialities for resistance and adaptation. Two groups of peoples are studied from this point of view, the Fang of the Gabon, and the Ba-Kongo near Brazzaville.

Both groups have undergone the same effects of the colonial situation and of contact with modern civilization: transformation of economic conditions, partial change to a monetary economy, wage-earning, sensitivity to crises, dislocation of old groupings, social mobility and instability, development of cities, and difficulty of the uprooted to regroup because of the precariousness of the economic structure. Often, because of the overwhelming strength of the colonizing power, the colonized react clandestinely, adding to the degradations and the antagonisms of the society but also revealing tendencies toward a new unity. These general phenomena show divergent aspects in the two groups, however, because of their differing social cohesion and history.

The Fang are rather recent immigrants, "detached conquerors" whose demographic equilibrium is shaky, who lack both an organized hierarchy and religious links with the earth. The growing of cacao has transformed many of them into peasants and developed among the more advanced the idea of a grouping by clan and by village; this is conceived as a new and democratic means by which these former conquerors may escape from their new feeling of inferiority toward the whites. One neo-pagan cult, the Bwiti, is tending to create a link with the ancestors and to exalt the idea of Fang power. Their traditional anarchy has prevented widespread regrouping. Like many African peoples (and like the peoples of Gaul before Caesar, one might add), the Fang had but a "micro-history" without national traditions. The barriers which marked the old groups are broken, but mobility remains. The very instability of their institutions makes study and observation of them difficult.

The Ba-Kongo, on the other hand, have a history, that of the Congo kingdom, christianized for some time by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. The other Congolese call them *Kongo mindélé* (the whites of the Congo). They were better prepared for contact with the whites and for the colonial situation. Their social structure is also more solid, with the institution of chieftains, matrilinear clans joined by alliances, and attachment to the earth. The Ba-Kongo contributed heavily to the population of Brazzaville; they made themselves the principal food suppliers of the area, and a large number of "evolved" individuals have come from their ranks;

among them there has been no absolute break between town- and country-dwellers, but a constant interchange of population and mutual aid. Therefore the crises of adaptation of this society are less internal than external; its movements constitute above all a reaction against the dominant white society, whether by the "amicalism" which deified the dead political leader, André Matswa, or by the messianism of Simon Kimbangu, seeking to reconcile with the ancestor cult a religion inspired by Christianity. In both cases may be seen attempts to escape white influence, to remain apart, to take the initiative and try for unification.

In the case of both the Fang and the Ba-Kongo, we see efforts to adjust an attitude of "counter-acculturation" and return to traditional values conceived as a lost golden age, along with the desire to attain equality in moving toward modernity, to reorganize with a view toward emancipation. Hence the off-balance and unstable character of the movements, called by Gurvitch the "effervescent and innovating collective behaviors" of people poorly integrated in a new African ensemble whose forms as yet exist only in barest outline.

The book on the *Brazzavilles noires* offers a striking view of this "budding" Africa. Two immense black villages, Poto-Poto and Bacongo, with their straw huts among dense verdure, contrast with the European city. Races sprung from various areas rub shoulders there, not always in the most peaceful conditions. The majority of the inhabitants are young men who have broken with the subsistence economy and many of whom gain an unstable living in small trades. Various transitory social groups are formed: associations of workers, associations based on place of origin, religion, or neighborhood. Sociological uprooting brings on a state of readiness to change, tensions, and a nostalgia for lost security, which sometimes take a political turn. Relations with the whites especially conform to a certain hierarchy and proceed according to a stereotyped pattern. The advanced native, dependent upon occidental civilization, most often reacts in an African way. Balandier sketches several significant biographies. Cities, a European invention, are still but slightly structured in Africa, where they rest on an unstable economy. Only economic progress and the opening of responsibilities to the Africans can assure effective progress.

The French study of ethnology has undergone profound changes in the postwar period, with the passing of the two great masters L. Lévy-Bruhl and Marcel Mauss. It has sought new directions, and certain foreign currents, notably American anthropology, have been recognized. There have

been some attempts to renovate ethnology from within, without breaking its frontiers. The brilliant Claude Lévy-Strauss has made numerous contributions (mathematical, linguistic, etc.) to the structural analysis of societies. Marcel Griaule, before his early death, sought to examine the explanation given by the members of the society under study before making a hasty interpretation; thus he penetrated much deeper than anyone before him into the traditional Negro mentality and its cultural manifestations.

Balandier's procedure is entirely different. It is linked to the profound social and political transformations of the postwar period, and particularly to the colonial crisis. Today's ethnologists no longer have to deal with partitioned, immobile societies, but rather with a world of movement in which global influences are brought into play and which poses essentially practical problems. From this point on the division between ethnology and sociology is senseless. The techniques of both must be employed, as well as those of other human sciences such as demography and history. This gives us the usage of the word "sociology" in its broadest sense.

We have much more evidence of these widening horizons, this interpenetration of disciplines. The school of L. Febvre and of Braudel has, by use of a sociological point of view, transformed our narrow conception of history. Paul Mus, in his studies of colonial problems, has introduced the notion of relationships among groups of differing civilizations. P. Bastide has tried to forestall the frequent confusions between society and culture. For Balandier, ethnological data are but the materials of a general science of social change; they enable him, notably, to interpret local variations of a single process. But the accent is on the constants: criteria common to all situations of dependence and phenomena of change; in short, he stresses the dynamic aspects of social life.

His method of procedure clearly shows three types of theoretical influence: a) certain Marxist attitudes: particular attention to the economic aspects of colonial domination; study of the ideologies by which colonizer and colonized alike try to mask, to compensate, to justify, or to interpret relations between the races; b) phenomenological points of view: importance attached to the notion of situation; notion of the reciprocity of perspectives; c) certain key concepts of G. Gurvitch: differentiation between the level of groups and that of the forms of sociability; notions of a global society, of de-structuration and re-structuration, of innovating behaviors, and, in general, of the levels on which the action of social change may be grasped.

It is nevertheless true that his particular conceptual contribution seems an important one and that he provides ideas most useful for the understanding of retarded societies in the path of accelerated change: the idea of dependence and its consequences in clandestine behavior (ambiguous actions, attitudes of negative opposition, superficial acceptance of foreign values); the idea of a conservatism which, far from being purely formalist and sterile, "gives a meaning to innovations" by choosing among them and transforming them; finally, dominating his whole view, the idea of social mutation, linked to the total crisis of a sociocultural ensemble through the action of subsequent intervention.

Thus these works, whose aim is the analysis of the "colonial situation," go beyond this aim in both time and place. The purely "colonial" aspect will more and more tend, in the British and French countries of West Africa, to yield to democratization, economic transformation, and the promotion of local elites. On the other hand, independent and non-colonial countries, where multiple ethnic groups and various degrees of advancement are nevertheless found, may present phenomena of domination and reactions of the same kind.

It would be lessening the scope of Balandier's works to describe them merely as colonial sociology. They provide a technique for the study of an expanding world and of phenomena of contact, caused by that shrinking of the planet which will doubtless appear in the future, along with the conquest of the atom, as the principal event of the twentieth century.

Notes on the Contributors

KENNETH EWART BOULDING was born and educated in England. He first came to the United States, of which he is now a citizen, as a commonwealth fellow at the University of Chicago in 1932-34. He has taught economics at Colgate, Fiske, McGill, and Michigan, was attached to the League of Nations economic and financial section in 1941-42, and was a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, 1954-55. He has written: *Economic Analysis* (New York, Harper & Bros., 1941; 3rd ed., 1955); *Economics of Peace* (New York, Prentice-Hall, 1945); *A Reconstruction of Economics* (New York, Wiley, 1950); *The Organizational Revolution* (New York, Harper, 1953).

In *Diogenes*, No. 3, ALFRED SAUVY wrote "On the Relations between Domination and the Numbers of Men." In this issue he is concerned with "Opinion and Power," another aspect of the problem which has concerned the author for many years in his work at the Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques. His most recent publications are: *L'Europe et la population* (Paris, Les Editions internationales, 1953); *Théorie générale de la population* (Paris, Presses Universitaires, 1952-54); *Les faits et les*

opinions (Paris, Les Cours de droit, 1955).

Sociology and language are the subject of MARCEL COHEN's discussion of the structural relationships observable between the two social phenomena. The distinguished linguist is director of Ethiopian studies at the Ecole des hautes-études of the Sorbonne and a regular contributor to the *Bulletin de la Société de linguistique*, *L'Année sociologique*, and other scientific journals. His principle publications are: *Les Langues du Monde* (with A. Meillet) (Paris, Champion, 1924; new ed., 1952); *Histoire d'une Langue: de français* (Paris, Editions Hier et Aujourd'hui, 1947; 2d ed., 1950); *Le Langage, structure et évolution* (Paris, 1950); *Pour une Sociologie du Langage* (Paris, 1956); *Cinquante Années de Recherches linguistiques, ethnographiques, sociologiques, critiques et pédagogiques* (Paris, Klincksieck, 1955); and, to appear shortly, *La grande Invention de l'Ecriture et son Evolution*.

INDRA DEVA is a research scholar in the department of economics and sociology, Lucknow University, India. His present interest lies in the folk culture of the Bhojpuri-speaking area, which is located in eastern Uttar Pradesh and

western Bihar, two states of northern India, and contains over twenty million people.

The first part of GERSHOM SCHOLEM's article on the Torah appeared in *Diogenes*, No. 14. See that issue for biographical data on the author.

GEORGE CÆDÈS has spent much of his philological career in those parts of the world in which he is expert. He has been professor of Indochinese philology at the Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient, and later director of the school, custodian of the Royal Library of Siam, and secretary-general of that country's Royal Institute. His published works include: *Les collections archéologiques du Musée nationale de Bangkok* (Paris & Brussels, Les Editions G. Van Oest, 1928); *Pour mieux Comprendre Angkor* (Paris, Maisonneuve, 1943); *Les états*

hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie (Paris, Editions de Boccard, 1948), and numerous articles in a variety of journals.

In "Mr. Bell on Tragedy," LESTER G. CROCKER, professor of romance languages and literature at Goucher College, Baltimore, reviews the theses presented by Charles G. Bell in *Diogenes*, No. 7, and takes issue with some of the author's ideas. Mr. Crocker has written several books on Diderot, among them: *Two Diderot Studies*; *Ethics and Esthetics* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1952) and *The Embattled Philosopher* (E. Lansing, Michigan State College Press, 1954), and has published a number of articles on eighteenth century thought. He spent 1954-55 in France as a Fulbright Research Scholar and Guggenheim Fellow.

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At times it may be necessary for the physician, the historian of music, or any other man of science to hold rigorously and with asceticism to his own subject, renouncing the idea of a universal culture in favor of the high fruition of the moment. Be that as it may, we bead-players must never approve or practise this delimitation, this narcissism, for our task is precisely to safeguard the idea of a *Universitas Litterarum* and its supreme expression, our noble *Game*, and ever and again to protect them from the propensity of the various disciplines towards self-sufficiency. But how can we preserve that which has no wish to be protected? How can we force the archaeologist, the pedagogue, the astronomer, etc., to give up delving deeper into his own speculations and to keep opening vistas to all the other disciplines? We cannot do it by constraint of rules. . . . The sole means of proving that our *Game*, and we, too, are indispensable, is to keep it constantly at the peak of all intellectual life, to fix with vigilance on every new outlook, each conquest, each new problem of knowledge, and, by drawing from the idea of unity that which will endow our universality, and that of our noble—albeit dangerous—*Game*, with a perpetual freshness, a form and a movement so harmonious, so attractive and convincing, so full of charm, that even the most dedicated research worker and industrious specialist will be forced at every instant to hear its message, to submit to its seduction and its spell.

HERMAN HESSE, *Das Glasperlenspiel*, pp. 210-11.

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